

Frankenstein's bills:
The Political Utility of Disjointed
Legislation



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Abstract

Disjointed legislation, bills that combine provisions pursuing substantively unrelated goals, is a pervasive feature of modern policymaking. This thesis develops a theory of divergence between primary and secondary provisions as a strategic response to the competing demands of mass electorates and influential interest groups. It argues that legislators exploit asymmetries in political attention: while bill titles and central provisions attract public scrutiny, embedded secondary policies often do not. Because voters devote limited attention to the detailed contents of legislation, secondary provisions can function as instruments of strategically quiet politics (Culpepper, 2010), enabling policymakers to accommodate organized interests without incurring substantial electoral costs.

To evaluate this argument, the thesis introduces novel measures of disjointedness: Relative section length and semantic divergence. These are derived from a large-scale corpus of enacted legislation in France, the United States, and the European Union. These measures capture the structural prominence of legislative sections and their substantive alignment with stated bill purposes. The analysis examines variation in the use of secondary provisions and tests whether patterns of divergence are associated with issue salience, lobby spending and the interaction between the two.

The thesis main finding is that high levels of lobby spending are positively associated with textual divergence and relative section length both at a section and legislation level. However, this is contingent on the level of public attention. Issues with high levels of salience are not responsive to lobbying expenditure.

Keywords: Interest Groups, Quiet Politics, Disjointed Legislation, Text Analysis.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act (GLBA) occupies a central place in the 2008 financial crisis. Enacted in 1999, the legislation sought to promote economic growth by deregulating the financial sector and allowing commercial banks, investment banks, and insurance companies to consolidate (Akhigbe and Whyte, 2004). It enabled banks to invest using customer deposits, thereby expanding their capacity for investment. While the policy initially contributed to increased investment and economic growth, it also facilitated the emergence of financial institutions that were effectively “too big to fail.” Importantly, the risks associated with such consolidation were well understood at the time (Akhigbe and Whyte, 2004). Policymakers nevertheless deemed the potential economic benefits sufficient to justify the trade-off.

Yet this conventional account overlooks a crucial aspect of the legislation: the quiet insertion of provisions that significantly weakened regulatory oversight of derivatives trading (Appelbaum, 2019). While the rest of the law was focused on increasing the amount of investing, these provisions drastically increased the types of risks the banks could take. The core purpose of the GLBA was publicly visible and contested, these additional measures remained largely unnoticed by voters. They were, in effect, hidden in plain sight.

Such cases are not exceptional. Contemporary analyses of legislation often treat bills as coherent policy instruments with unified objectives. In practice, however, many laws contain provisions that are only loosely connected to their stated goals. These disjointed legislative packages embed secondary policies: provisions that are not necessary for achieving the primary objective of a bill but are nonetheless enacted alongside it.¹ Despite their prevalence, we lack a systematic understanding of why such provisions are included and under what conditions they are most likely to arise. Further, we lack ways of detecting these provisions outside of the use of cost intensive human legal experts.

Recent examples illustrate the broader relevance of this phenomenon. Hungary has faced sustained criticism from the European Court of Auditors for procurement rules that disproportionately benefit politically connected firms (European Court of Auditors, 2023). In Poland, traditional “milk bars” have struggled despite generous subsidies because funding rules restrict how support can be used (The Economist, 2024). In the United States, broader fiscal

¹In legal scholarship, “secondary policies” typically refer to policies that can be implemented without direct parliamentary approval. In this thesis, the term is used more broadly to describe provisions that are substantively unrelated to a bill’s stated purpose but are included within it and require legislative approval.

reforms have included provisions that restrict government procurement to companies with policies aligned with specific ideology, such as whether they permitted guns on their premises (Savage et al., 2025). These policies are often politically unpopular. Yet they are nonetheless enacted.

This thesis addresses the following central question: *What explains variation in the use of secondary policies in legislation?* I argue that such policies are a strategic response to a well known dilemma of policy makers; tension between two competing political pressures: responsiveness to the general electorate and responsiveness to organized interest groups.² Secondary policies allow policymakers to satisfy organized interests while minimizing the electoral costs of doing so. By embedding controversial or narrowly targeted provisions within broader legislative packages, politicians exploit asymmetries in political attention and information between voters and organized interests. Since voters are unable to read all legislation that is implemented, they are likely to miss specific provisions. Even sitting politicians acknowledge this strategy of obfuscation. Senator Lieberman (2020) observed, “leadership often resorts to passing unpopular ideas by attaching them to bills supported on both sides of the aisle.”

While a substantial literature documents the influence of interest groups on policymaking (Baumgartner and Berry, 2009; Hall and Deardorff, 2006a), the mechanisms through which legislators strategically structure policy content remain underdeveloped. Existing accounts typically treat policy complexity as a by-product of administrative necessity (Weaver, 1986), a reflection of heterogeneous public preferences (Abou-Chadi et al., 2024), or a tool for overcoming legislative gridlock (Câmara and Eguia, 2017; Lee, 2022). In contrast, this thesis conceptualizes legislative complexity, in particular the use of secondary policies, as a deliberate design feature of political strategy.

This is measured by introducing two novel measures of legislative disjointedness: semantic divergence and section length. Using this novel approach, I find that lobby spending is positively associated with disjointedness. Further, this effect is conditional on popular salience of issues. The association between disjointedness and lobby expenditure does not hold for issues with a high degree of salience. The reverse marginal effects, where lobby spending inundates the effect of salience also holds. The thesis yields two main contributions.

First, the thesis advances debates on interest group influence and voter responsiveness by showing that policymakers adopt distinct strategies depending on the visibility of policy content, thereby refining the classic cross-pressure framework. In contrast to prominent accounts of the policy trade-off, such as Rogowski and Kayser (2002) and Furlong (1997), which treat the relative influence of interests as uniform across legislation, this approach emphasises that influence is conditional on the visibility of policy content to voters. The cross-pressure framework, in its conventional formulation, posits that legislators face a binary choice between satisfying organised interests and accommodating their electoral base, with the resulting policy reflecting the relative bargaining strength of each. Yet this framing implicitly assumes that voters and lobbyists compete over the same observable units of policy. The framework proposed here departs

²For the purposes of this thesis, interest groups are defined as organizations representing specific constituencies or policy objectives, including corporate lobbies, labor unions, and advocacy organizations.

from this assumption by treating legislation itself as a multidimensional object whose components vary systematically in their political visibility. Once this heterogeneity is recognised, the cross-pressure trade-off becomes context-dependent: legislators need not choose between voters and interest groups when policy can be partitioned into visible and obscure components. Instead, they can pursue a layered strategy in which primary provisions cater to electoral expectations while secondary provisions accommodate organised interests. This insight reframes the question of “who wins” in legislative bargaining, suggesting that aggregate measures of policy responsiveness, such as those used in studies of unequal representation (Gilens, 2012a; Bartels, 2008), may obscure systematic patterns of differential influence operating within individual bills.

Second, the thesis introduces a novel empirical framework for analysing legislative structure by distinguishing between primary and secondary policy content using text-based methods. This provides a new lens for identifying government priorities and uncovering less visible dimensions of policymaking. Existing scholarship on legislative content has tended to treat bills as unitary observations, coding them by topic, ideological direction, or fiscal scope, and thereby losing the internal variation that this thesis argues is consequential. By disaggregating legislation into its component sections and measuring both their relative structural prominence and their semantic alignment with stated bill purposes, the framework recovers a dimension of legislative behaviour that has previously been accessible only through labour-intensive case studies or expert coding. More broadly, it offers a scalable large-N approach to capturing legislative disjointedness, thereby opening new avenues for the study of legislative bargaining in the tradition of Cox and McCubbins (1986). Whereas earlier work in this tradition has inferred bargaining dynamics from roll-call patterns, committee assignments, or geographic distributions of benefits, the text-based approach developed here permits direct observation of the bargaining residue embedded in legislative text. This has implications beyond the immediate study of secondary policymaking. The same measures can be used to study coalition formation in multiparty systems, where disjointedness may reflect the accommodation of partner demands and to track shifts in agenda control across legislative cycles. By rendering the internal architecture of legislation legible at scale, the framework brings a previously latent feature of policymaking within the domain of systematic comparative analysis.

These empirical contributions also speak to broader scholarship on blame avoidance and policy concealment. Foundational work by Weaver (1986) and Immergut and Anderson (2007) demonstrates that politically sensitive reforms are often implemented through indirect and less visible mechanisms. Subsequent scholarship has extended these insights to retrenchment politics (Pierson, 1994), regulatory delegation (Huber and Shipan, 2002), and the strategic use of complexity in fiscal policy (Hallerberg et al., 2009). A closely analogous logic has been documented in trade politics, where Kono (2006) and Bown and Tovar (2011) show that democratic governments routinely substitute tariff for less visible non-tariff to accommodate protectionist interests without provoking electoral backlash or violating international commitments. In

both cases, policymakers respond to a dual-audience problem by replacing a transparent policy instrument with a functionally equivalent but less observable alternative. Yet despite the centrality of concealment strategies in some work, empirical measurement of such practices has remained challenging, relying largely on qualitative reconstructions or narrow case-study evidence. Researchers have struggled to operationalise concealment in ways that travel across cases, in part because the very feature being studied, low political visibility, makes concealment difficult to observe. By identifying disjointed legislative structures, this thesis offers a systematic way to capture such strategies, thereby extending the empirical toolkit available for studying how policymakers minimize public scrutiny. The approach complements rather than supplants existing measures: where qualitative work can identify why a particular concealment strategy was chosen, the text-based measures developed here can reveal where and how often such strategies are deployed across thousands of bills, offering a basis for testing scope conditions that have previously been articulated only as theoretical conjectures.

The remainder of the thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 develops the theory of disjointedness as a strategic answer to interest group pressure conflicting with electoral incentives. Chapter 3 outlines the new empirical strategy of measuring of secondary policymaking through disjointedness. Chapter 4 tests the theory of Chapter 2, using the novel approach introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and their implications for existing theories. Chapter 6 concludes by considering broader implications and avenues for future research.

Chapter 2

Theory

While existing theories often emphasize the difference in preferences of interest groups and the general electorate, this thesis emphasizes their differing degree of attention devoted to the legislative process. While voters may be aware of the broad outlines of a bill, they tend to overlook its specific provisions. In contrast, interest groups closely monitor the details of legislation as it moves through parliament. This is partially due to the difference in resources, interest groups are able to employ people to read through legislation and identify the provisions relevant to them. Further, interest groups are specifically interested in the political arena. Conversely, voters have interested beyond the political world. Therefore, Kingdon (1967) argues that politicians consider voters as only moderately interested in policy. This thesis distinguishes between *primary legislation*, which is publicly visible and explicitly communicated, and *secondary policies*, which are embedded within broader bills and often remain hidden from public scrutiny. The provision in the Trump administration’s “Big Beautiful Bill” that prohibits state regulation of artificial intelligence offers a pertinent contemporary illustration. This information asymmetry enables policymakers to accommodate interest group demands while keeping those details deliberately quiet (Culpepper, 2010).

Policy makers can employ the strategy of secondary policy in two ways: positive and negative. The positive case, where policy makers pass unpopular policies as secondary policy, is the main focus of the thesis. However, the mirror image, where interest groups try to undermine popular policies by weakening the implementation is also an example of this strategy of secondary policies. In fact, policy weakening has been a more widely studied subject (Oberlander and Weaver, 2015; Kono, 2006). The matrix of when secondary strategies are relevant can be expressed as such:

	Voter Support	Voter Opposition
Interest Group Support	Pass as Primary Policy	Secondary Policy (Positive) ¹
Interest Group Support Opposition	Secondary Policy (Negative) ¹	Rarely Pass ²

¹ Only if the expected benefits exceed the expected costs.

² Some policies, such as necessary budget cuts, may pass despite lacking support from both voters and interest groups. These cases are relatively rare and are not the focus of this analysis.

Table 2.1: Typology of policy options based on voter and interest group support

The empirical leverage of this framework arises from the fact that politicians must navigate this trade-off under uncertainty about voter behaviour and the risk of detection. This thesis posits salience as the main driver of risk of detection. High salience pushes policymakers towards alternatives rather than resorting to secondary requirements. However, policymakers have access to strategies for bypassing voter preferences that they employ when the reward is sufficient.

The mechanisms through which interest groups shape policy differ across the two types of secondary policies in the typology. Culpepper (2010) shows that powerful interest groups are not only able to advance policies that benefit them but can also block popular regulatory initiatives. One key strategy involves inserting statutory language or exemptions that dilute the effectiveness of legislation (Levine and Forrence, 1990). In contrast to this, positive secondary policy, the focus of this thesis, focuses on inserting unrelated provisions within large legislation. This additive strategy has received much less scholarly attention.

The difference in mechanisms has important empirical implications. Dilutive strategies, though common, often remain closely tied to the core bill while undermining the state’s regulatory capacity, and therefore do not qualify as “secondary” policy in a strict sense (Levine and Forrence, 1990). Therefore, the measurements proposed in this thesis are better able to capture positive secondary policies rather than the dilutive strategy. Thus, the emphasis on additive policies should thus be understood as a consequence of the empirical strategy employed and the theoretical contribution, rather than as a claim about the relative prevalence of the two mechanisms.

For the purposes of this thesis, popularity is defined simply as a politician’s ability to enhance their electoral prospects. This definition accommodates cases in which a policy may be broadly unpopular yet electorally advantageous for a key constituency. In this respect, the thesis engages with the literature on pork-barreling (Cox and McCubbins, 1986). Conventional accounts in this literature typically interpret legislative complexity as a by-product of negotiation, wherein each specific provision delivers electoral utility to at least one pivotal parliamentary actor. This thesis, however, focus on an alternative case: policy complexity

may also arise as a deliberate strategic choice rather than merely as an outcome of bargaining difficulties. Accordingly, in certain contexts, politicians may refrain from publicising the inclusion of unrelated amendments, keeping such provisions quiet to avoid scrutiny. This is not to suggest that the logic articulated by Cox and McCubbins (1986) is invalid. Rather, a more comprehensive understanding of policy complexity should incorporate both the mechanisms of pork-barreling and those of strategic obfuscation.

A complementary account of disjointed legislation and legislative complexity is offered by Gratton et al. (2021), who argue that legislative complexity can also stem from the overproduction of laws. Which they attribute to a desire policymakers to be perceived as taking action during crises without dealing with previous legislation, creating an ever more complicated legislative environment. Rather than disputing these theories, this thesis aims to extend our understanding of the multiple sources of policy complexity. It does so by focusing on deliberate complexity.

2.1 The Strategic Logic: Costs and Benefits

The decision to employ secondary requirements is shaped by two sets of considerations: the costs associated with the risk of voter detection, and the benefits flowing from interest group support. Preference divergence between interest groups and the electorate is the central variable mediating both. As divergence increases, interest groups stand to gain more from obfuscation, since openly adopting their preferred policies would provoke voter opposition. At the same time, higher divergence also raises the potential electoral costs for policymakers if such provisions are detected. High divergence is then an explicit scope condition for when this theory is applicable. When combined with the electoral variable of salience, divergence yields the following strategic environment:

Table 2.2: Matrix of Divergence and Salience

	Low Divergence	High Divergence
High Salience	Open passage dominates; possible credit-claiming	Most contentious; alternatives may dominate
Low Salience	Little reason to hide; open passage dominates	Secondary Policymaking

When both salience and divergence are low, policymakers have little incentive to conceal their actions. When salience is high but divergence remains low, open passage should again prevail, potentially accompanied by credit-claiming, as voters are attentive but broadly supportive. In contrast, when salience is low and divergence is high, the political environment approximates secondary policy making, where conditions are closet to “quiet politics” (Culpepper, 2010). Secondary requirements are particularly attractive in this quadrant because they allow policymakers to deliver targeted benefits to organised interests while keeping the probability of voter detection low. Finally, when both salience and divergence are high, the strategic

logic is less straightforward. If voters are attentive and would strongly oppose the policy if exposed, secondary requirements may be deemed too risky and policy makers will refrain from this strategy

2.1.1 The Cost Side: Electoral Visibility

This section examines the predictors of the risk of secondary provisions being detected by the public or media. The core intuition is straightforward: Employing secondary policies becomes more costly as the risk of detection and voter opposition to the policy goes up. Therefore, with the increase of the electoral costs, the frequency of secondary policy should go down.

Theoretically, the voter behaviour side of this thesis can be described along two axes: risk of detection and clarity of signal. The former measures how much attention voters pay to an issue, while the latter captures how well-formed their preferences are. As Wittman (2004) note, voters can be uninformed about some issues but still hold preferences. For example, voters might have well-formed beliefs about local street lighting but are unlikely to change their votes based on it. Conversely, voters may have strong attachment to their pensions, but their exact preferences are not always clear (Gerber et al., 2015). The electoral environment can then be described as such:

	Low Clarity of Signal	High Clarity of Signal
High Risk of Detection	Strong incentive to obfuscate; voter preferences uncertain but issue visible	Most constrained; detection risk high, preferences clear
Low Risk of Detection	Least constrained; low detection risk and no clear voter preference to violate	Moderate incentive; preferences clear but low visibility

Table 2.3: Strategic environment by voter salience and clarity of signal

In this idealized version, policy makers try to hide policies where the risk of either detection or of public opinion going against them (captured by clarity of signal) are present but acceptable given the potential reward.

Issues in the top-right quadrant (high clarity and high risk) are the most constrained: attempts at policy obfuscation through secondary provisions are more likely to be detected and politically sanctioned. By contrast, issues in the bottom-left quadrant (low clarity and low salience) generate little incentive for obfuscation, as the political costs of advancing them as primary policies are minimal.

The strongest incentives for obfuscation arise in the remaining two quadrants, where either high visibility or clearly articulated preferences raise the political stakes. In these cases, poli-

cymakers face meaningful risks but still retain some scope to conceal controversial provisions within broader legislative packages.

For the empirical analysis, issue salience will be used as a proxy for these two dimensions. The correlation between salience and risk of detection is clear. The more people care about the issue, the likelier they are to pay attention to newspaper reporting on those issues and the more likely they are then to sanction politicians if they subvert their preferences.

While clarity of signal is a distinct dimension, they are empirically difficult to disentangle. Warntjen (2012) highlights that voter attention to issues and whether they hold opinions on them things are high correlated. This is because issue salience coincides with people have a clear ideological stake in the decision of politicians. Those stakes are likely to be higher high if they have clear convictions on those issues (Boswijk and Coler, 2020).

As a result, the empirical strategy aggregates them into a single measure of salience. While this approach captures overall political attention, it necessarily abstracts from the distinction between visibility and preference clarity. This is assumption is not always satisfactory. For example, some high salience issues are highly polarized and therefore are highly salient. While voters might have individually clear opinions, the preferences on a societal level are not always clear (Hernández et al., 2021). These cases are partially outside of the scope conditions of this argument. Since the thesis explicitly focuses on cases of divergence between popular and interest group opinion, indicating a clear popular view, at least to some extent. Yet, developing measures that can separately identify salience and voter clarity, particularly at scale, would provide a valuable extension and allow for a more precise test of the theoretical framework.

Further, the relationship between obfuscation and issue salience is not monotonic. Instead, it should follow the pattern of an inverted-U curve: obfuscation is low at very low levels of salience, rises through the middle of the salience distribution, and falls again at very high levels.

The logic of each segment is distinct. At very low salience, voters are not watching. A legislator who wishes to deliver a favoured provision to an interest group can simply do so openly, as primary legislation, at no electoral cost. There is no reason to bury the provision. Since, obfuscation is a strategy for managing electoral risk. The strategy is unnecessary where that risk is negligible. At the far left of the salience distribution, the incentive to hide is essentially absent.

As salience rises into the middle range, the strategic picture changes. Voters are now paying sufficient attention that openly passing a lobby-favoured provision would attract scrutiny and potential backlash, making concealment attractive. At the same time, the bill is not so prominent that burying a provision is prohibitively costly: journalists and opposition researchers are engaged but not exhaustively parsing every section of the text, and the expected detection probability for a well-placed hidden provision remains manageable. This is the zone of maximum incentive: the electoral cost of transparency is high enough to motivate obfuscation, and the electoral cost of being caught obscuring something is not yet high enough to deter it.

At very high salience, bills are under intense public scrutiny, rival interest groups and opposition parties are reading every provision, and the media is actively looking for discrepancies between the bill's stated purpose and its specific content. In this environment, attempt to bury a provision are more likely to be detected. Further, detection on a high-salience bill carries a larger reputational penalty than detection on an obscure one. Legislators become unwilling to absorb the risk, even at high levels of lobby compensation, and the frequency of obfuscation falls back toward zero.

Notably, this inverted U-curve is different from other accounts of the relation between salience and voter influence. (Nicolaidis et al., 2023; Rogowski and Kayser, 2002) treat salience as having a positive and linear effect on the influence of voters instead interest groups. However, this account neglects the strategies available to policy makers at issues with moderate amounts of salience. Strategies are available to avoid detection at moderate salience issues. This thesis then nuances our conventional understanding of the impact of stated voter interest in issues by highlighting its non-linear role.

The inverted-U relationship has an important implication for empirical estimation. A simple linear regression of obfuscation on salience will recover a positive coefficient if the bills in the sample are concentrated to the left of the turning point. If most bills fall in the range where rising salience is still increasing the incentive to obfuscate. It will recover a negative coefficient if most bills are concentrated to the right of the turning point, where rising salience is suppressing obfuscation. The sign of a linear estimate is therefore not a direct test of the theory. A sample dominated by low- and medium-salience legislation will tend to produce a positive linear coefficient, while a sample that includes a substantial share of highly prominent bills will tend to produce a negative one. Both are consistent with the same underlying non-linear relationship.

Some important nuances on the assumption made in the thesis need to be made, in practice voter behavior is nuanced. Voters do not matter equally, and their signals are often ambiguous. It is therefore useful to elaborate on the assumptions about voter behavior embedded in the theory before moving to the operationalization.

Firstly, there might be independent reasons to try to influence popular attention on issues besides obfuscation. Political parties tend to emphasize issues on which they enjoy a credibility advantage, while downplaying or obscuring those on which they are less trusted. For instance, far-right parties often highlight immigration, while green parties emphasize environmental policy, reflecting areas where they are perceived as more competent by voters (Abou-Chadi and Wagner, 2019). Conversely, parties may seek to obscure or deprioritize issues where they lack such advantages.

This mechanism operates alongside, rather than in place of, the main theoretical argument. While the core model focuses on how policymakers manage the tension between voter attention and organized interests, variation in the clarity of voter preferences adds an additional layer through which salience and obfuscation strategies may be shaped.

Further, the theory folds the risk of detection and electoral punishment into one dimension. This is not always the case. Certain infrastructure might be highly visible but not important enough for voters to pass their vote on (Boswijk and Coler, 2020). Yet those are cases where discovering information on an issue is not costly. In this case, detecting provisions within legislation is always costly since they require consuming legislative analyses (Martinelli, 2006). Voters that care about an issue are more likely to bear these costs than those with no clear attachment to an issue (Martinelli, 2006).

Finally, voter influence varies across the electoral cycle. Alesina et al. (1993), with an updated account in Canes-Wrone and Park (2012), argue that voters matter more as elections approach. This temporal dynamic maps neatly onto the theory developed here: as the election draws nearer and voter influence increases, the costs of concealing policy within secondary requirements rise. Consequently, the use of this strategy is expected to decline as elections approach, an empirical prediction elaborated in the hypothesis section below.

The literature on measuring political salience is extensive, yet it remains contested (Dennison, 2019). Broadly speaking, two main approaches prevail: one based on media coverage, and another on public opinion data. The media-based approach is exemplified by Epstein and Segal (2000), who construct a New York Times index measuring the frequency of issue mentions in news reporting. A similar measure is employed by Helbling and Tresch (2011), focusing on policymaking in six advanced democracies. While such indices are informative, they do not cover all years or cases included in this study. The polling-based approach measures salience using survey data on the issues voters consider most important (Weaver, 1986). However, some issues, such as housing or social services, consistently score high in public importance without necessarily fluctuating with electoral cycles, and certain policy areas may be salient to institutional actors while remaining obscure to the broader electorate, a dynamic particularly relevant in EU contexts. Further, since parties want to cater to well defined voter preferences and therefore are more likely to put those issues in their manifestos. Combining both measures makes combining voter signal clarity and salience into one more theoretically persuasive.

We can then test the following hypothesis:

H1. *The relationship between legislative disjointedness follows an inverted-U curve: bills of very low salience attract little obfuscation because concealment is unnecessary; bills of medium salience attract the most obfuscation; and bills of very high salience attract less obfuscation as detection risk becomes prohibitive.*

2.1.2 The Benefit Side: Lobbying Power and Incentives

On the benefit side, secondary provisions function as a legislative technology through which lawmakers can accommodate the demands of organized interests. As the organizational and financial capacity of interest groups grows, so too does the incentive for legislators to rely on these instruments, which permit the delivery of targeted benefits while minimizing their visibility and their traceability to the broader electorate (Arnold, 1990; Hacker and Pierson, 2010).

While the scope condition necessitates divergence between the electorate and interest groups, there are also good reasons to believe this happens often. Interest groups are not identical. They differ in their preferences and in the strategies they employ to advance them. Business interest groups, in particular, tend to favor narrowly targeted benefits that generate concentrated gains for a narrow constituency while imposing diffuse costs on the broader public, making them politically costly to pass in the open (Olson, 1965; Lowi, 1964).

By contrast, groups advocating for racial justice, environmental protection, or gun regulation pursue goals less able to be hidden within larger legislation. This is since their goals are often programmatic and therefore need more broad scale change (Schattschneider, 1960). This is less likely to be able to be hidden. Sometimes such groups are still catered through by specific requirements in government procurement that require ideological alignment such as diversity requirements in California (Klein and Thompson, 2025). Yet, since those benefits are minor to the broader scale and therefore secondary policies are less popular among such interest groups.

There are several mechanisms through which interest group strength is converted into legislative influence and these are especially efficient in the context of low-salience policymaking. First, financial resources purchase access to legislators and their staff, sustaining engagement throughout the drafting process rather than only at high-profile decision points (Wright, 1996; Ansolabehere et al., 2003). This access is especially valuable for shaping provisions that emerge during committee negotiations or amendment stages, where bargaining occurs largely outside public view. Second, organized interests serve as repositories of technical expertise, supplying legislators with model language, regulatory analysis, and stakeholder intelligence that reduce the marginal cost of drafting complex provisions (Hall and Deardorff, 2006b). This informational subsidy is particularly consequential for secondary policies, which typically involve technical or domain-specific adjustments where in-house expertise is scarce. Third, well-resourced groups are able to monitor legislative activity in real time, identifying opportunities to insert provisions during mark-up, conference negotiations, or last-minute revisions (Baumgartner et al., 2009). Each of these channels is more effective for secondary provisions than for headline policies, where public scrutiny and partisan contestation raise the political costs of accommodation.

Some pluralist accounts predict that competing interest groups could offset one another's influence (Truman, 1951). In practice, this balancing mechanism is sharply limited. Interest groups frequently operate in parallel rather than in direct opposition, targeting different policy domains or legislative moments (Cigler et al., 2020; Baumgartner et al., 2009), so their activities do not necessarily cancel out. Mobilizing opposition to specific secondary provisions is further constrained by voter attention: because such provisions are embedded within complex legislation, generating awareness or coordinated resistance is difficult even when countervailing interests are present (Hacker and Pierson, 2010).

A further source of variation concerns preferences over the process of passing legislation. Business groups, on average, benefit from low-salience environments in which policy can change

with limited public scrutiny (Culpepper, 2010). Other groups, by contrast, often prefer high-visibility policymaking, particularly when their objectives involve broader social or cultural transformation in addition to legislative outcomes. This distinction underscores an important nuance: not all interest groups seek to influence policy through the same channels, and the effectiveness of secondary policymaking strategies depends in part on these differing preferences. Part of this heterogeneity is bracketed by the scope of this thesis, which focuses on settings characterized by clear distributive conflict and the potential for low-visibility policymaking. Nevertheless, the heterogeneity of interest groups remains an important qualification to the theoretical framework and suggests avenues for further research.

Empirically, measuring interest group power is notoriously difficult. Financial contributions and lobbying expenditures provide only a partial proxy for influence, often understating the importance of access, informational advantages, and strategic positioning within policymaking processes (Dür, 2008; Mahoney, 2007). They also fail to capture structural power, whereby firms exert influence by virtue of their economic position rather than through direct lobbying (Lindblom, 1977; Fairfield, 2015). As Culpepper (2011) emphasizes, firms whose investment or employment decisions carry macroeconomic consequences shape legislative behavior indirectly, as policymakers anticipate the effects of policy choices on growth and employment. Such forms of influence leave few observable traces and are therefore difficult to measure systematically. The distribution of influence also varies across institutional contexts and issue domains: labor unions, for instance, tend to play a more central role in social democratic party systems than in Christian democratic or right-liberal ones (Thelen et al., 2021; Iversen and Soskice, 2006), complicating cross party comparisons of interest group power.

Despite these limitations, the present analysis employs lobbying expenditure as a tractable and comparable proxy for interest group activity. This choice rests on three considerations. First, expenditure data are among the few systematically available measures of lobbying activity, making them suitable for large-scale empirical analysis (Dür, 2008). Second, while imperfect in absolute terms, expenditures are plausibly correlated with influence within issue areas and over time, rendering them appropriate for within-unit and panel analyses (Drutman, 2015). Third, expenditure-based measures are widely used in the comparative lobbying literature (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Drutman, 2015), facilitating comparison with existing findings. Although imperfect, lobbying expenditure captures a key dimension of organized interest engagement and enables systematic cross-case comparison. On this basis, I derive the following hypothesis:

H2. *Lobbying expenditures are positively associated with the level of disjointed legislation.*

2.1.3 The Interaction Between Costs and Benefits

The cost-side and benefit-side explanations are not just additive, they also interact. High salience should attenuate the effect of lobbying on obfuscation and high lobbying could diminish the effect of salience.

High salience diminishes the effect of lobbying. The core of this argument is straightforward. When a bill is highly salient, the legislator’s electoral exposure per unit of hidden content is large. To induce the legislator to take on that exposure, the lobby must offer increasingly generous compensation. But there is a point at which the exchange simply becomes too costly for the lobby to justify: the electoral risk the legislator bears outpaces what the lobby is willing to pay, and the transaction breaks down. At the highest levels of salience, politicians might refrain from catering to well-resourced and well-organised lobbies and refrain from seeking hidden statutory provisions.

Further, the relative value of concealment to the lobby itself will also change. On a high-salience bill, the very fact that the bill is prominent means that any buried provision is more likely to be surfaced by journalists, opposition researchers, or rival interest groups who are already closely reading the text. Salience is partly endogenous to actions of political entrepreneurs (Hobolt and De Vries, 2015). They can try to strategically lower or heighten the public attention to an issue. However, this is more likely to happen and to work when public attention on an issue is already high. So, while salience is partially endogenous to political actors, it is limited by the public demand.

Therefore on high salience issues, the legislator is more likely to demand compensation not just for including the provision but for absorbing the reputational cost of being seen as captured. Both the demand for compensation and the probability of detection rise together with salience, compressing the space in which the lobby–legislator exchange is mutually advantageous.

This argument is consistent with the broader quiet politics literature. Culpepper (2010) shows that organised interests achieve their greatest policy influence not by overpowering public opposition but by operating in environments where that opposition has not yet mobilised. Further, Culpepper and Lee (2026) argues that when salience is high the informational advantage that makes quiet lobbying effective has been substantially eroded. The lobby can still spend money and deploy expertise, but it is doing so into a political environment that is much more resistant to concealment. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3a *The marginal effect of lobbying intensity on disjointedness is decreasing in bill salience.*

High lobbying and Salience The mirror image, the marginal impact of salience when lobbying is high, is theoretically interesting. On the hand, marginal returns suggest that at high levels of lobby spending, there might be an increased willingness to forego some of those benefits to avoid the electoral costs.

Yet, there might be some scenarios where politicians are largely immune from public pressure. Culpepper (2010) argues that high levels of spending are associated with increased degrees of corporate capture. This can insulate political operatives from conventional risk calculations. Since legislators are unwilling to alienate their most important donors, sufficiently high lobby spending may override the deterrent effect of salience altogether: The political cost of defying a captured relationship outweighs the electoral cost of being seen to accommodate it. The dampening effect of salience is therefore not uniform: it bites hardest where lobbying relationships

are transactional and weakest where they have hardened into something closer to dependence. This is articulated in the following hypothesis:

H3b. *The marginal effect of salience on disjointedness is decreasing in lobby spending.*

2.2 Theoretical Foundations

The theory rests on several assumptions that merit explicit discussion. This section outlines how the thesis conceptualises the initial positions of interest groups and voters in terms of their capacity to advance or obstruct legislation.

2.2.1 Policy Interest

Since the theory is focused on policy making, it is reliant on the assumption that both voters and interest groups are, to some degree, policy-seeking actors (Richardson, 2000; Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015). Politicians, in turn, are assumed to gain benefits from responding to these preferences. This is a standard premise in Political Economy following Downs (1957). Accordingly, this thesis assumes that politicians pursue policies that both satisfy influential interest groups and enhance their electoral standing. This assumption rests on good academic backing (Wlezien, 2004). Brody and Page (1972) convincingly argues that in Western countries voters do seem to be policy interested and vote for parties that best represent their policy preferences. In his literature review, Wlezien (2004) posits is a widely accepted viewpoint in academia that political parties are responsive to policy preferences of the voters.

2.2.2 Mechanisms of Interest Group Influence

The mechanisms through which interest groups are able to include secondary requirements also deserve attention. Capital and expertise are two main ways through which interest groups can influence legislation.

The first mechanism is perhaps the most intuitive. Here, interest groups provide financial resources, volunteers, or candidates to parties in exchange for the representation of their interests. In this case, the passing of potentially unpopular policies. This also encompasses more personal pathways, such as revolving door dynamics, through which individuals move between interest groups and political office (Vidal et al., 2012). Much of the literature on interest groups emphasises this form of influence (Furlong, 1997; Rogowski, 2018; Mueller and Murrell, 1986).

Secondly, interest groups are able to change legislation through providing expertise. Since policy makers are unable to be fully informed on all legislative issues, they often rely on outside sources for information (De Bruycker, 2016; Esterling, 2007). However, these outside sources are often funded by interest groups and lobby organizations (De Bruycker, 2016). In some cases, interest groups even supply pre-written legislation that is then passed by policy makers (Hertel-Fernandez, 2014) even legal input to assist politicians in crafting policy. In this way, they can exert more direct influence compared to the capital mechanism. Notable accounts of this type of influence are provided by Cigler et al. (2020) and Culpepper (2010), and it

is particularly pronounced in policy areas with limited bureaucratic expertise (Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Dür, 2008), such as within the European Union.

A further mechanism operates through the influence of political elites. Gilens and Page (2014) document a striking pattern in U.S. policymaking: the preferences of the most affluent Americans (defined as the top decile of the income distribution) predict policy outcomes far more reliably than those of the median voter, whose preferences exert negligible independent influence once elite views are taken into account. They attribute this gap in part to the social and material proximity of legislators to economic elites. Elected officials are themselves disproportionately drawn from affluent and professional backgrounds (Carnes, 2013), and they interact with wealthy constituents, donors, and acquaintances at substantially higher rates than with lower-income citizens (Bartels, 2008; Page et al., 2013).

Gilens and Page (2014) treat economic elites as a third channel of influence distinct from organized interests. For tractability, the present analysis sets this channel aside. It is worth noting, however, that the boundary is porous. Gilens (2012b) shows that the social networks linking policymakers to wealthy constituents tend to align with business interests, since the policy preferences of affluent Americans and those of organized business overlap substantially. While there are issue domains in which the two diverge, most notably questions of taxation and labor-market regulation, the shared socialization and ideology of elite networks often produce convergent pressure on political actors (Hacker and Pierson, 2010; Domhoff, 2014).

Some scholars, notably Culpepper (2010), go further and argue that policymaking is often driven more by interest groups than by politicians themselves. According to this perspective, interest groups effectively propose most laws that politicians then adopt (Sunstein, 1985). Because these groups have incentives to avoid detection, the same dynamics surrounding hidden policymaking apply. Moreover, embedding provisions within large bills can obscure policy objectives even from the politicians themselves. Empirically, however, distinguishing this interest-group-dominated world from the one presented in this paper is challenging when the underlying incentives are similar. For the purposes of the theory, the main actor making the decision to include secondary legislation is less relevant.

Nevertheless, the view that policymakers completely cede decision-making power to interest groups is not widely accepted (Rogowski, 2018). By definition, policymaking remains the responsibility of elected officials, who rely on interest group input as a resource rather than as a substitute for their own authority. Claims that politicians routinely surrender all power to placate well-funded interests are not *prima facie* persuasive, and empirical evidence for such widespread practice is limited (Hyneman, 1940; Frantzich, 1979).

2.2.3 Separating Electoral and Interest Group Utility

A central conceptual challenge in the interest group literature is how to compare the support provided by voters with that provided by interest groups (Rogowski and Kayser, 2002). Because interest groups aid campaigns primarily through financial contributions, resources that parties then convert into votes, it becomes difficult to treat interest-group support as analytically

distinct from electoral support (Cigler et al., 2020). How, then, can we separate the influence of interest groups from that of voters?

There are several reasons why such a distinction remains meaningful. First, as Culpepper (2010) argues, politicians face their own individual-level incentives. These are often tied to the dynamics of the revolving door. Where helping interest groups secure policy victories could increase the chances of legislators to obtain high paying jobs after leaving office. Further, electoral logic involves both persuasion and mobilisation (Baron, 1994). Uninformed voters may be more susceptible to mass-media campaigns. Interest-group support can also serve as an informational signal that shapes the preferences and behavior of otherwise uninformed voters. As Rueda (2007) shows, endorsements from organized actors, such as union officials, can enhance a candidate's perceived credibility independently of their specific policy positions. In this sense, interest-group support also generates political benefits through its effect on voter perceptions. Because these benefits derive from a distinct mechanism of setting policy. Interest group support and voters can be treated as separate components of utility in the theoretical framework.

We can therefore place voter support and interest-group support within a standard utility framework featuring multiple sources of political utility, as in Bueno de Mesquita (1994). Following Rogowski and Kayser (2002), I forgo introducing ideological weighting of politicians in their ideological weighting of interest groups and voters.

2.3 Institutional Sources of Cross-National Variation

It is worth discussing some potential institutional factors in variation. Countries with stronger parliamentary scrutiny, freer press environments, and more robust freedom-of-information regimes expose hidden provisions to a higher probability of detection, effectively raising. At the same time, the legislative cost varies with institutional features of bill drafting: subject-matter coherence requirements, the power of parliamentary committees to amend government bills, and the prevalence of omnibus packaging conventions all shape how costly it is for legislators to bury provisions in semantically distant or positionally remote sections of a bill. Due to the limited amount of cases ($N=3$), the theory below will not be tested in this thesis. Yet, thinking about the institutional variation is a crucial part of the picture and testing these theories with an even larger dataset would surely be a worthwhile expansion of the theory proposed here.

2.3.1 The Legislative Process and Drafting Costs

Three features of the legislative process are particularly relevant to legislative drafting. First, countries vary in whether subject-matter coherence is formally enforced. Germany's Einheitlichkeitsprinzip and Sweden's informal Lagrådet advisory process impose real costs on omnibus packaging that have no equivalent in the United Kingdom or Italy, where no formal subject-matter rule exists. In terms of the model, these rules raise costs for divergent provisions.

Second, committee power differs markedly: Swedish and German committees substantially re-draft bills before plenary consideration, whereas UK Public Bill Committees function primarily as evidence-gathering bodies with limited amendment authority. Stronger committees create an additional institutional audience that may surface hidden provisions. Third, the prevalence of omnibus packaging conventions, ranging from Italy’s routinised *maxiemendamenti* to Sweden’s effectively omnibus-free single-reading process provides an independent source of baseline variation in divergence and hiddenness, which the empirical analysis absorbs through country fixed effects.

2.3.2 Electoral Accountability and the Electoral Penalty

With respect to electoral accountability, Sweden and the Netherlands sit at the high end of both press freedom rankings and V-Dem accountability scores, while Italy and Spain score considerably lower. The model predicts that this translates into lower equilibrium obfuscation in Scandinavian and Benelux countries.

2.3.3 Remaining Institutional Variables

Several additional institutional features are theoretically relevant.

Electoral System. Voter influence varies systematically across electoral systems. In majoritarian systems, where competition centres on individual candidates and clear partisan alternatives, voters exert more direct control over representatives (Cox, 1997). By contrast, proportional representation (PR) systems diffuse accountability across multiple parties and list structures, reducing the electoral visibility of specific policy actions and the marginal voter’s relevance.

Coalition Formation and Policy Visibility. PR systems often produce coalition governments, introducing coordination challenges and collective incentives for opacity. Compromises required for coalition unity may discourage transparency, as parties prefer to keep contentious provisions hidden (Strøm, 1990). At the same time, coalition partners may monitor one another, constraining unilateral attempts to obscure policies. Incentives to conceal persist when coalition parties share interests in shielding certain measures, particularly those benefiting powerful interest groups (Dür, 2008).

Geographic Concentration and Varieties of Capitalism. Geographic concentration shapes interest group influence within the policy process. In majoritarian systems, policy-makers have incentives to target policies toward key industries concentrated in specific regions (Rickard, 2018). The varieties-of-capitalism framework (Hall and Soskice, 2001) highlights

how institutional differences structure policymakers' incentives more broadly: coordinated market economies may encourage protection of national champions through mechanisms that extend beyond direct lobbying. Extending this analysis to the domain of legislative obfuscation remains a promising avenue for future research.

Chapter 3

Measuring Disjointedness

To evaluate the hypotheses developed above, the thesis draws on a novel large-N dataset designed to capture variation in legislative hiddenness.¹ Disjointedness is operationalized through two complementary indicators: relative section length and semantic divergence, each discussed in detail below. These measures capture distinct dimensions of the relative prominence of secondary policy provisions within legislative texts. The empirical strategy regresses the proposed independent variables on these dependent variables in order to assess the plausibility of the theoretical framework.

It is important to clarify that these measures capture legislative disjointedness rather than strategic obfuscation per se. As such, they may also reflect patterns consistent with legislative bargaining, as described by Cox and McCubbins (1986). Since the measure captures disjointedness, we cannot capture legislative intent. While this overlap complicates the interpretation of the measures as direct indicators of the theorized mechanism, it also broadens their analytical utility. In particular, the approach provides an additional lens through which to identify and study legislative bargaining, thereby extending its relevance across adjacent strands of the literature.

This section proceeds in three parts. First, it outlines the construction of the dataset and the operationalization of the two novel dependent variables, with particular attention to issues of conceptual validity and measurement reliability. Second, it presents descriptive statistics to characterise the data.

3.1 Dataset

The empirical analysis draws on a newly constructed dataset that integrates three large-scale legislative corpora from the United States, the European Union, and France. Specifically, the dataset merges materials introduced by Kornilova and Eidelman (2019), Laurer and Borrett (2020), and Harvard Library Innovation Lab (2024). These jurisdictions were selected to maximize institutional variation across political and legal systems while leveraging the availability of high-quality, machine-readable legislative texts.

¹Replication materials, including the code and final dataset, are available at this repository.

All legislative documents are segmented at the section level, which constitutes the unit of analysis throughout the study. In total, the merged corpus comprises 1,752,695 legislative sections drawn from 593,295 laws. To reduce noise and eliminate substantively uninformative observations, all sections containing fewer than ten words are excluded. In addition, because the U.S. corpus includes both enacted statutes and bills that were introduced but not passed, the sample is restricted to enacted legislation to ensure comparability across jurisdictions. After these preprocessing steps, the final dataset contains 1,084,532 unique legislative sections drawn from 567,067 laws.

3.1.1 Dependent Variables

The dataset introduces four new variables: Relative section length, semantic divergence, law classification, and section classification. The first two constitute the principal dependent variables in the empirical analysis and the other two provide important metadata. Taken together, they capture both the structural visibility of a provision within a legislative act and its substantive alignment with the act’s stated purpose. While the other two offer metadata for the later analysis.

Relative section length captures the relative prominence of a section within a bill and is defined as the extent to which a legislative section constitutes a small share of the overall text. To keep results intuitive, a low relative section length gets a high score to indicate a higher degrees of hiddenness. To achieve this, the inverse of section length is used. Formally, relative section length is measured as:

$$\text{Relative section length}_i = 1 - \frac{\text{number of sentences in section } i}{\text{total number of sentences in the bill}}$$

Under this specification, smaller sections embedded in longer bills receive higher values. The underlying intuition is that provisions occupying less textual space are less likely to attract attention from readers or external observers evaluating the bill as a whole. The measure therefore captures the structural visibility of legislative content. At the same time, brevity alone does not imply meaningful concealment; Relative section length is thus a necessary but not sufficient condition for a provision to be considered substantively “hidden”.

To capture another dimension, the analysis incorporates a measure of semantic divergence. Even short provisions may be transparent if they align closely with the bill’s central purpose, whereas brief but substantively incongruent sections are more plausibly characterized as concealed. Semantic divergence is assessed using cosine distance computed over term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF–IDF) representations. Specifically, the measure captures the semantic dissimilarity between each legislative section and the bill’s title, which serves as a concise proxy for the legislation’s primary policy intent. Higher values indicate greater semantic disjointedness.

Semantic similarity measures are widely used in linguistics and political science to assess textual coherence. For instance, Little et al. (2020) show that such measures yield informative estimates of similarity across political texts, including relatively short documents. Although

performance tends to decline as text length decreases (Huang et al., 2011), these approaches remain substantively meaningful in large-scale applications (De Boom et al., 2015). An additional advantage of the TF-IDF cosine distance metric is its low computational cost, which is particularly important given the size of the corpus and the need to facilitate replication and future extensions. I demonstrate below that it performs well relative to more computationally intensive alternatives.

Taken together, section length and semantic divergence capture distinct but related dimensions of legislative concealment. The two measures are positively and statistically significantly correlated. This indicates that structurally less salient provisions tend, on average, to diverge from a bill’s stated purpose (see Appendix C). However, the correlation is very weak ($\rho = 0.10$). This can be both explained by the fact that they are theoretically distinct or because one or both of the measures are noisy. Therefore, they are treated separately as opposed to be grouped together. Since if it is theoretically distinct grouping them together will mean losing nuance. Further, grouping two noisy measurements together can lead the noise of one to obscure the pattern of the other (Wentzell and Hou, 2012). Using both measurements is especially useful for discovering which of these mechanisms are best at capturing divergence. Nevertheless, neither measure directly captures legislative intent or strategic motivation. They therefore remain proxies for concealment rather than direct measures of strategic behavior. To address this limitation, the empirical analysis evaluates alternative explanations, such as legislative bargaining and coalitions building as plausibility probes for salience-based mechanisms. Although this strategy does not yield definitive causal identification, it provides a structured framework for assessing whether observed patterns are consistent with theories of strategic obfuscation.

3.1.2 Aggregation

It is useful to consider whether the two dependent variables should be aggregated into a single measure. Theoretically, however, such aggregation is not desirable for two reasons.

First, the two measures capture distinct dimensions of strategic obfuscation. Relative section length reflects the extent to which a provision is embedded within a bill, i.e., how small or inconspicuous a section is, whereas divergence captures the degree to which that provision departs from the main legislative content. These dimensions are conceptually separable. One can readily imagine provisions that are closely aligned with the broader bill but deeply embedded and therefore difficult to detect, as well as highly divergent provisions that are nonetheless prominently featured. Each measure therefore captures a different aspect of the underlying strategy, and combining them would obscure this distinction.

Second, the mechanisms linking the independent variables to these outcomes may operate differently across the two dimensions. For example, highly salient issues or those attracting substantial lobbying activity may receive greater scrutiny, reducing the scope for textual concealment. At the same time, these same factors may increase the urgency or political importance of an issue, raising the likelihood that divergent provisions are appended to broader legislation. As a result, the effects of salience and lobbying may differ in magnitude or even

direction across the two measures. Aggregating them into a single index would risk masking these distinct relationships and complicating interpretation.

We can also see this theoretical difference by examining their empirical distribution. Figures 3.2 and 3.1 display the marginal distributions of semantic divergence and relative section length, respectively. Both measures are bounded between 0 and 1, yet their empirical distributions are markedly different.

Figure 3.1 shows a multimodal distribution for relative section length. One mass of observations lies close to zero, corresponding to sections that occupy a relatively large share of the bill. A second concentration appears around the midpoint of the distribution, and a third sizeable cluster lies near the upper bound. This pattern reflects heterogeneity in section size and structural embedding. Some provisions are highly prominent within their bills, others moderately embedded, and still others occupy only a small fraction of the legislative text.

Conversely, Figure 3.2 shows that semantic divergence is heavily concentrated near the upper bound. The density rises sharply as divergence approaches one, indicating that a substantial share of legislative sections are semantically distant from the language used in their titles. Lower and intermediate values occur comparatively infrequently.

These contrasting distributions bear directly on the aggregation question. A mechanical aggregation would impose a unidimensional structure on what are empirically distinct dimensions of legislative embedding. The graphical evidence indicates that the two variables capture different forms of variation, and collapsing them into a single index would obscure this heterogeneity.

The distinction is not merely statistical but conceptual. Although both measures serve as proxies for strategically concealed secondary policies, they capture different mechanisms: Relative section length reflects structural visibility within a bill, whereas semantic divergence captures substantive disalignment between a section and the bill's stated purpose. Each is therefore an imperfect indicator of strategic intent. Aggregating them does not resolve the underlying problem of unobserved intention; rather, it risks conflating two analytically separable phenomena without improving identification.

An alternative method of aggregation would be to use a trigger rule based on sufficiently high levels of relative section, since structural marginality is a necessary condition for concealment. Under this approach, a provision would only be considered plausibly "hidden" if it exceeds a specified hiddenness threshold, combining it then with semantic divergence to gauge the degree of concealment. Conceptually, this logic is appealing.

However, the distributions displayed in Figures 3.2 and 3.1 complicate the implementation of such a cutoff rule. As shown in Figure 3.2, semantic divergence is heavily concentrated near the upper bound, implying that a large share of sections would satisfy even demanding divergence thresholds. Divergence therefore offers limited leverage for sharply distinguishing a subset of exceptional cases. In contrast, Figure 3.1 reveals a multimodal distribution of hiddenness, with substantial mass both near zero and near one. While high hiddenness may be necessary for structural concealment, the distribution does not suggest a natural or theoretically grounded

breakpoint at which hiddenness becomes “sufficiently” high. Any single cutoff would therefore be sensitive to arbitrary parameter choices and to distributional features of the data.

Accordingly, although high relative section length is plausibly a necessary condition for concealment, operationalizing concealment through a trigger rule based on a fixed hiddenness threshold risks introducing discreteness where the underlying phenomenon is continuous. Such an approach would rely heavily on ad hoc threshold selection rather than on a clear theoretical demarcation.

Therefore, relative section length and semantic divergence should not be collapsed into a single composite measure. Disjointedness is better understood as a multi dimensional phenomenon, encompassing both structural opacity and substantive disalignment. For purposes of theoretical clarity and measurement validity, the two indicators are most appropriately analyzed jointly but separately rather than aggregated into a single scalar construct.

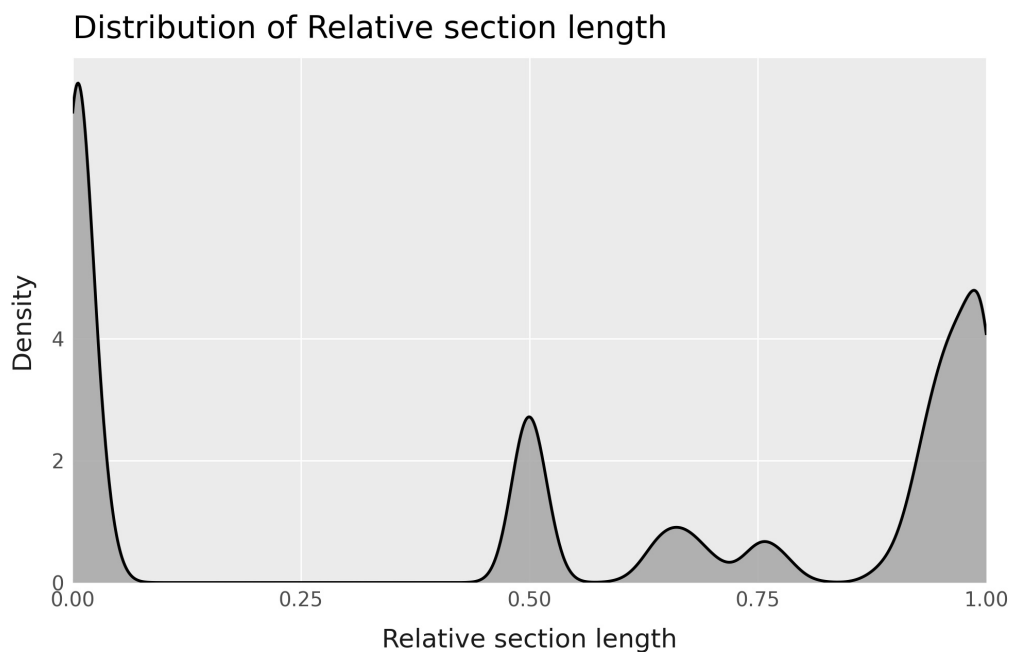


Figure 3.1: Distribution of Relative section length

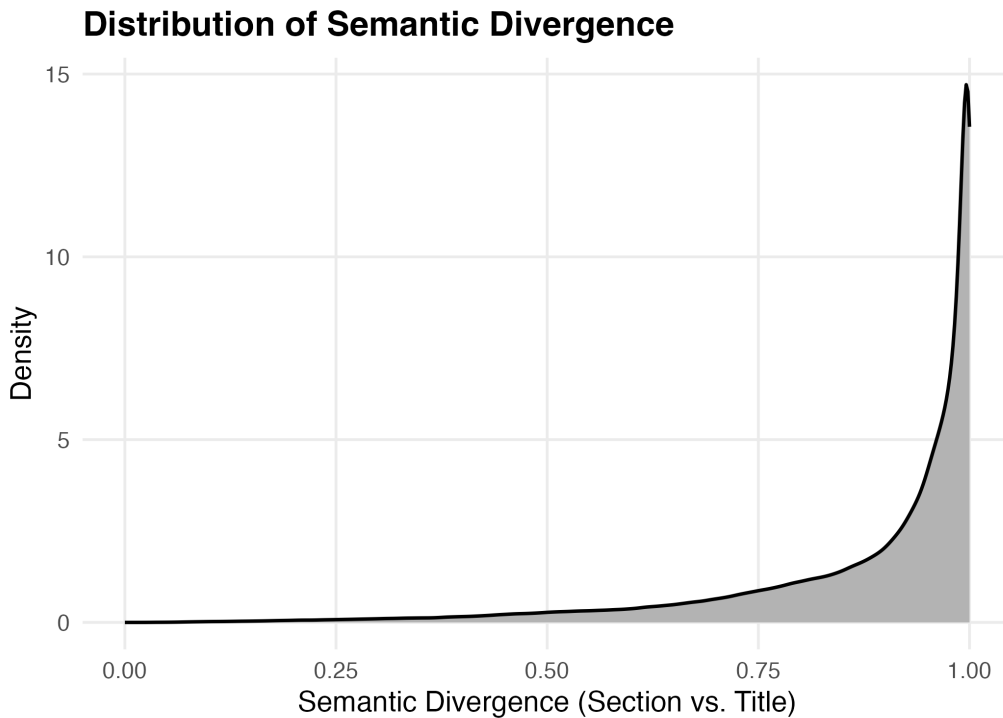


Figure 3.2: Distribution of Semantic Divergence (Section vs. Title)

3.1.3 Meta-data

Legislative titles and sections are assigned to policy subjects using a bag-of-words matching procedure with a minimum cosine-similarity threshold for classification (see Appendix B). Although large language model-based classifiers are increasingly common, the chosen approach is substantially less computationally intensive and performs well in large-scale text classification tasks when conservatively parameterized (Graff et al., 2025). By imposing a relatively high similarity threshold, the procedure prioritizes precision over recall. This choice increases the likelihood of false negatives while reducing false positives. This is defensible given the size of the dataset and the emphasis on minimizing systematic classification errors (Graff et al., 2025).

To assess classification validity, all assignments were validated on a random sample of five hundred observations. The procedure performs well overall, with most misclassifications occurring in sections that plausibly span multiple issue areas. Because the algorithm restricts each legislative section to a single subject category, performance necessarily declines for provisions addressing more than one policy domain. As an additional validation exercise, I examine the joint distribution of title-level and section-level classifications using a heatmap. Observations coded as “none” are excluded, as these reflect coding conventions rather than substantively meaningful content. The resulting heatmap shows that titles are most frequently paired with sections classified in the same subject area, producing a strong diagonal pattern. This alignment is consistent with face validity expectations that bills and sections within the bill largely deal with the same subject, supporting the plausibility of the classification procedure.

At the same time, a nontrivial share of observations falls outside the diagonal, indicating substantive divergence between the stated subject of the legislation (title-level classification)

and the content of individual sections. This descriptive evidence underscores the empirical relevance of examining secondary provisions whose substantive content departs from the formal subject of the bill.

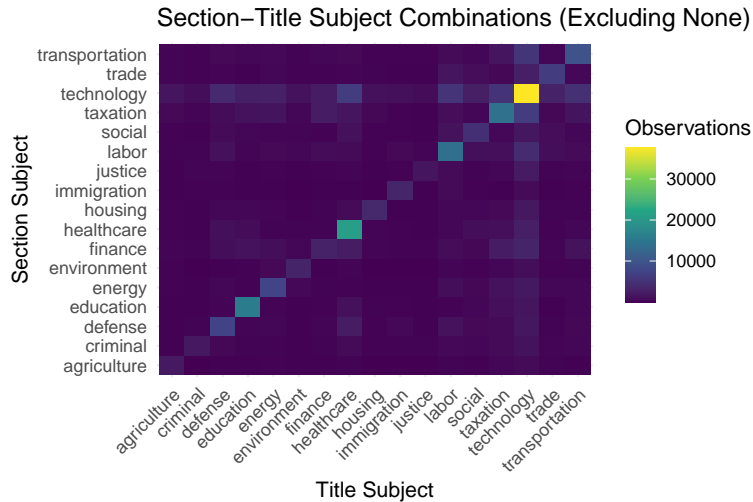


Figure 3.3: Joint Distribution of Title- and Section-Level Subject Classifications

3.2 Validity

Relative section length and semantic divergence capture two distinct parts of disjointedness. However, they are imperfect proxies. In particular, these measures do not preclude the possibility that apparently disjointed legislation reflects deliberate strategies to target electorally salient constituencies (Rickard, 2018) or to secure the support of pivotal political actors (Poole and Rosenthal, 1985). Accordingly, an analysis of elite public discourse focused on a narrower set of legislative provisions would constitute an important extension of the empirical strategy developed here.

This project nevertheless tries to address these alternative explanations through a set of controls designed to isolate their effects. Moreover, the analysis focuses on relative divergence rather than absolute classification. As a result, even if the measurement strategy is subject to some degree of error, inference remains valid so long as classification errors are randomly distributed across observations (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013). This is in contrast with estimators of a binary probability, another issue with a trigger rule approach (Starovoitov and Golub, 2020).

While relative section length is a relatively straightforward calculation, divergence is conceptually more challenging. Three tests assess the plausibility of the proposed measurement strategy of divergence. First, a qualitative small-N analysis of 10 randomly chosen laws test the extent to which the measure captures its underlying theoretical construct. Second, the TF-IDF approach is compared to alternative, more computationally straining measurement strategies. Third, the same measurement is employed to test four high profile bills. This then shows the measurements’s performance on legislation previously analyzed by subject-matter experts, providing evidence of external validity.

Qualitative overview To qualitatively assess the validity of the measurement, ten laws were randomly selected, and for each law the sections with the highest and lowest divergence scores were identified and summarized in a comparative table (see Appendix D). This qualitative inspection reveals several consistent patterns.

First, the classification procedure continues to struggle with very short sections that convey little substantive information. However, there is no strong reason to believe that such cases are unevenly distributed across laws. Moreover, since the majority of these observations are excluded from the analysis, this limitation is unlikely to meaningfully bias the results.

Focusing on substantively meaningful sections, two broader patterns emerge. First, divergence varies considerably across laws. Some laws display systematically higher divergence across most sections, while others are comparatively homogeneous. For instance, the Campaign Information Act contains a large number of sections with divergence scores close to one, whereas the EU decision on the principles of potential accession to Turkey shows virtually no sections with similarly high divergence.

Second, sections that define the scope conditions of a law or introduce new subject matter that is not directly reflected in the title tend to receive consistently high divergence scores. The scoring system appears particularly sensitive to provisions that introduce specific or technical requirements that are tangential to the core subject of the legislation. For example, provisions concerning coin requirements for payphones or translation requirements for Norwegian and Icelandic languages within European fertilizer legislation receive notably high divergence scores.

Although some substantively related sections are associated with elevated divergence scores, the emphasis on relative divergence across sections and laws limits the implications of this pattern for the overall findings.

Alternative Quantitative Measurements In addition to the qualitative assessment, I evaluate alternative, more computationally intensive measures of textual divergence. Specifically, I compare the primary TF-IDF cosine divergence between section titles and section text to two alternatives: (i) TF-IDF cosine divergence between sections and the full legislative text, and (ii) Jensen-Shannon divergence (JSD), which directly compares underlying term probability distributions (Endres and Schindelin, 2003). Both measures are widely used in text-as-data applications and provide a benchmark for assessing construct validity (Endres and Schindelin, 2003).

Rather than relying on regression estimates, I examine the pairwise correlations between the primary measure and these alternatives. As reported in Appendix E, the correlation between title-section cosine divergence and section-text cosine divergence is $r = 0.40$, while the correlation with Jensen-Shannon divergence is $r = 0.48$. These coefficients indicate substantial positive associations and are consistent with convergent validity: each measure captures related dimensions of textual divergence, while retaining distinct sources of variation.

That these measures exhibit similar empirical behavior despite differences in computational complexity is substantively meaningful. It suggests that the primary measure recovers much of the signal contained in more resource-intensive approaches, thereby offering an efficient

proxy for textual divergence without sacrificing validity. This is particularly consequential in large-scale comparative settings, where computational constraints often shape feasible research designs (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013).

Taken together, the correlation patterns suggest that the primary measure aligns closely with established alternatives and performs comparably in capturing meaningful variation in legal text divergence, while remaining computationally more efficient (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013).

External Validation To further evaluate the substantive validity of the measures, we conduct a case-based analysis of four large and well-documented legislative texts that journalists and scholars have widely characterized as complex, omnibus, or internally heterogeneous: (1) the Affordable Care Act (2010), (2) the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017), (3) the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, adopted in 2016), and (4) the U.S. omnibus spending package commonly referred to as the “Big Beautiful Bill.” Contemporaneous media coverage repeatedly highlighted these statutes as containing unexpected, obscure, or “buried” provisions embedded within broader legislative packages. The full breakdown of the most and least divergent sections for each statute is reported in Appendix F). The reason these were chosen compared to laws that exhibit little disjointedness for variation is that there is no coverage of laws that lack disjointed legislation. Since we cannot proof an absense, variation within the law provides sufficient coverage (Baškarada, 2014)

Across U.S. and EU cases alike, newspaper reporting emphasized the opacity and internal heterogeneity of these texts. Coverage of the Affordable Care Act, for example, noted that alongside its highly visible insurance reforms, the statute included numerous lesser-known provisions such as industry-specific taxes and ancillary regulatory mandates that were embedded deep within the law and largely absent from public debate at the time of passage (Pear, 2010). Many of these sections have since been linked to lobbying activity by later reporting (Pear, 2010). Similar patterns appeared in reporting on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which journalists described as unusually complex and hurriedly assembled, with several consequential elements, most notably the cap on the state and local tax deduction implemented through business rules, that were difficult to identify in real time and often clarified only through post hoc explanations (Cohen and Tankersley, 2017; Stein, 2017). In the European context, reporting on the GDPR distinguished a small set of highly salient provisions, such as the right to erasure and the imposition of substantial administrative fines, from a much larger body of technical articles and recitals characterized as dense, legalistic, and challenging even for experts to interpret (Hern, 2016; Kolbert, 2018). Finally, coverage of large U.S. omnibus spending packages explicitly warned that must-pass legislation frequently contains narrowly targeted riders and policy changes embedded within thousands of pages, reinforcing media narratives of legislative opacity and internal divergence (Sherman, 2018; Cochrane, 2018).

For each statute, we compute section-level semantic divergence scores relative to the law’s title and examine whether the measure identifies provisions that external observers described

as substantively unexpected or difficult to detect within the broader legislative package. Importantly, this analysis does not involve re-estimating the model or tuning parameters on these cases. Instead, it evaluates whether the measure behaves as theoretically expected in high-salience, well-understood examples.

Across all four texts, the semantic divergence measure aligns closely with these expectations. Although a small number of observations cluster at the technical upper bound of 1.000 due to cutoff artifacts and therefore do not reflect substantively meaningful differences these cases are limited and do not affect the overall pattern. In the Affordable Care Act, the least divergent sections are core structural amendments to the Social Security Act and the Public Health Service Act, with divergence scores between 0.898 and 0.951. The most divergent provisions, by contrast, include the excise tax on indoor tanning services, the inflation adjustment to health flexible spending arrangements, and the exclusion for participants in State student loan repayment programs, each scoring close to 1.000. These are precisely the kinds of ancillary, industry-specific, or narrowly targeted provisions that contemporaneous reporting flagged as embedded outside the bill’s headline purpose. Similarly, in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the least divergent sections concern the central reforms to individual income tax rates and the repeal of the alternative minimum tax (scores between 0.903 and 0.954), while the most divergent provisions include the extension of the American Samoa economic development credit, the unrelated business income tax treatment of section 501(a) entities, and the rules governing private operating foundations and 501(c)(3) political activity (all scoring 1.000) provisions that received limited attention during the legislative process but were later emphasized in retrospective reporting.

The same pattern appears in the European case. Within the GDPR, the least divergent provisions concern the Board’s secretariat arrangements and the repeal of Directive 95/46/EC, with scores between 0.850 and 0.895, reflecting their structural centrality to the regulation. By contrast, the most divergent articles (each scoring 1.000) include the existing data protection rules for churches and religious associations, the delegation-of-powers procedure, the treatment of pre-existing international agreements, and the review of other Union legal acts. Precisely the kinds of technical and procedural provisions that journalistic accounts highlighted as dense and difficult to interpret. Finally, in the omnibus “Big Beautiful Bill,” the highest-scoring provisions are concentrated in narrowly targeted clauses concerning eligibility documentation under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, which bear little semantic relation to the bill’s stated reconciliation purpose and closely mirror media narratives about riders and last-minute insertions.

Taken together, these cases suggest that the semantic divergence measure captures meaningful variation in the internal heterogeneity of large legislative texts and performs particularly well in contexts that external observers have characterized as substantively complex or internally divergent.

Further, as highlighted in Figure 3.6, the measurement captures the French institutional reform of 1989 (the establishment of the *Commission supérieure de codification*), which was

explicitly aimed at improving the coherence and quality of legislation by reducing unnecessary divergence. French mean divergence falls from approximately 0.93 in the late 1980s to a trough of roughly 0.83 by the late 1990s, a sustained decline of about ten points on a bounded scale. The fact that the measure responds to this reform provides additional external validation, as it detects a known institutional intervention designed to affect precisely the dimension under study.

3.3 Descriptive Data

This section evaluates the descriptive properties of the dataset and documents cross-national, temporal, and subject-level variation in secondary legislative embedding. It proceeds in two steps. First, it assesses data quality and comparability across cases. Second, it examines descriptive trends in relative section length and semantic divergence across countries, policy domains, and time.

3.3.1 Data Quality

Although the EU and U.S. datasets are broadly comparable in construction, the French corpus differs in important respects. The EU and U.S. materials were mechanically segmented into sections for the purposes of this dataset. By contrast, the French texts were originally organized in sections and subsequently consolidated by title. As a result, the French corpus does not exhibit the same cut-off artifacts observed in the EU and U.S. materials. In general, this makes the French data the most reliable out of the three cases. This distinction warrants caution in comparative interpretation, as observed cross-case differences may partly reflect variation in data construction rather than underlying substantive differences.

To assess whether these procedural differences translate into meaningful variation in section length, Figure 3.4 displays the distribution of word counts per observation for the EU, France, and the United States. The horizontal axis reports the number of words per section, while the vertical axis represents the density (i.e., the relative frequency) of observations of a given length.

Two patterns are apparent. First, all three corpora are strongly left-skewed. Most legislative sections are short, while comparatively few extend to substantial length. This distribution is characteristic of section-based legislative texts, in which brief provisions are common and lengthy sections are relatively rare. Therefore, the baseline level of relative section length is high.

Second, and more substantively relevant, the French distribution contains fewer extremely short observations than either the EU or U.S. datasets. The U.S. corpus exhibits the highest concentration of short sections, followed by the EU, whereas the French distribution is shifted modestly toward longer text segments. In other words, very short entries are more prevalent in the EU and the U.S. than in France.

This pattern is consistent with the earlier discussion of data construction. Mechanical segmentation of EU and U.S. texts can generate short fragments, for example, when headings or subsections are treated as standalone units. In contrast, because the French texts were originally structured and later consolidated, short fragments are less likely to appear as independent observations. Consequently, the French dataset contains fewer extremely short entries.

To clarify the overall structure of these distributions, Figure 3.5 presents the same data on a logarithmic scale. Because word counts are highly skewed, linear scaling compresses variation among longer sections. The logarithmic transformation expands the lower range and compresses the upper tail, facilitating clearer comparison across the central mass of the distribution (Feng et al., 2014).

On the log-scaled plot, the similarities across cases become more evident. Most observations in all three datasets fall within a broadly comparable range of moderate length. Although the French distribution remains somewhat shifted toward longer segments and the U.S. retains a stronger concentration of short sections, the overall shapes are not fundamentally different. Thus, while data construction affects the prevalence of extremely short observations, the general structure of the corpora is broadly comparable once skew is accounted for.

Taken together, these results underscore the importance of caution in cross-national comparison. Differences in the frequency of short sections—particularly between France and the EU/U.S. partly reflect methodological artifacts due to processing. At the same time, substantial overlap in the central portions of the distributions suggests that the datasets are not fundamentally incomparable. Rather, the evidence points to a modest but systematic construction effect in subsequent analyses.

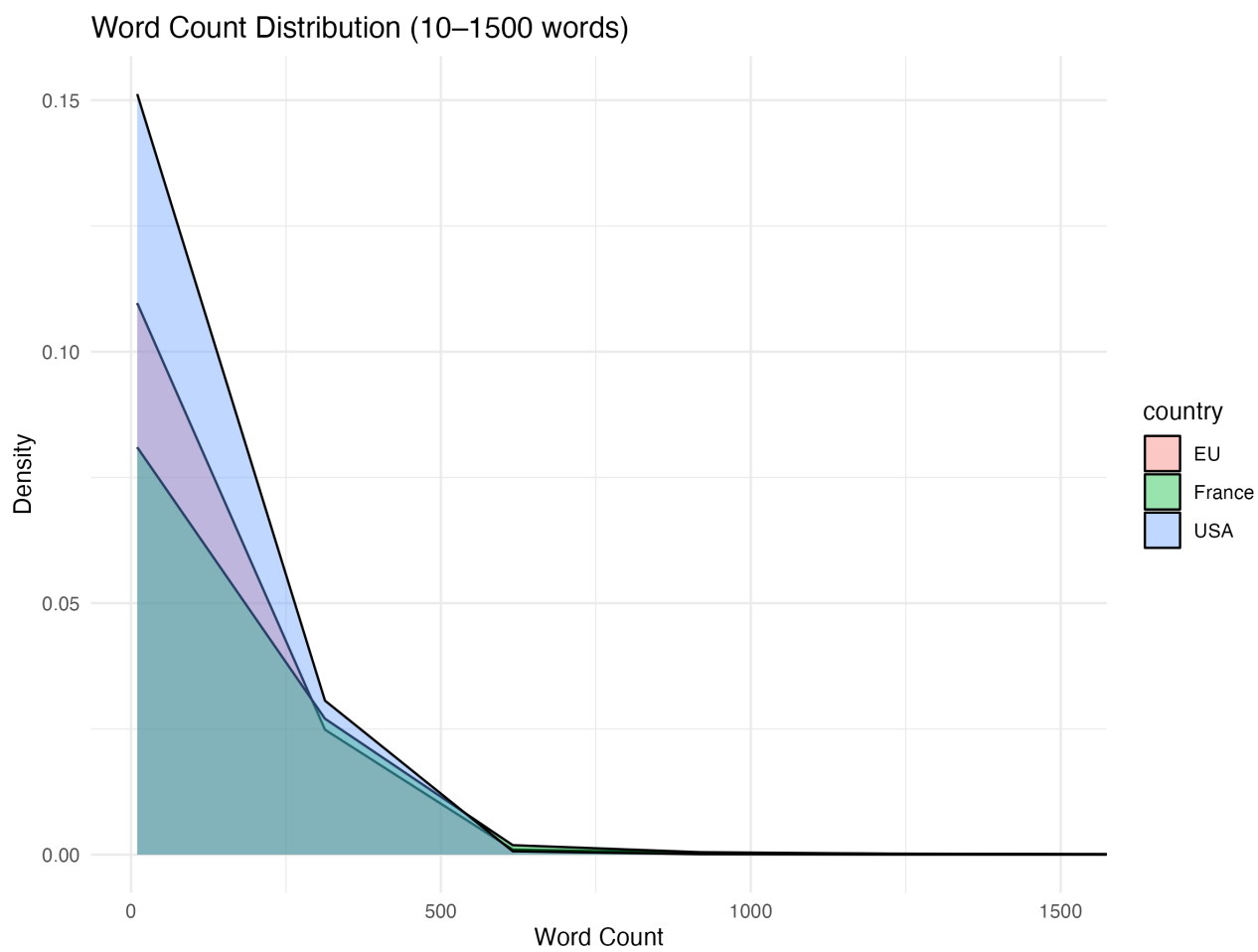


Figure 3.4: Density plot

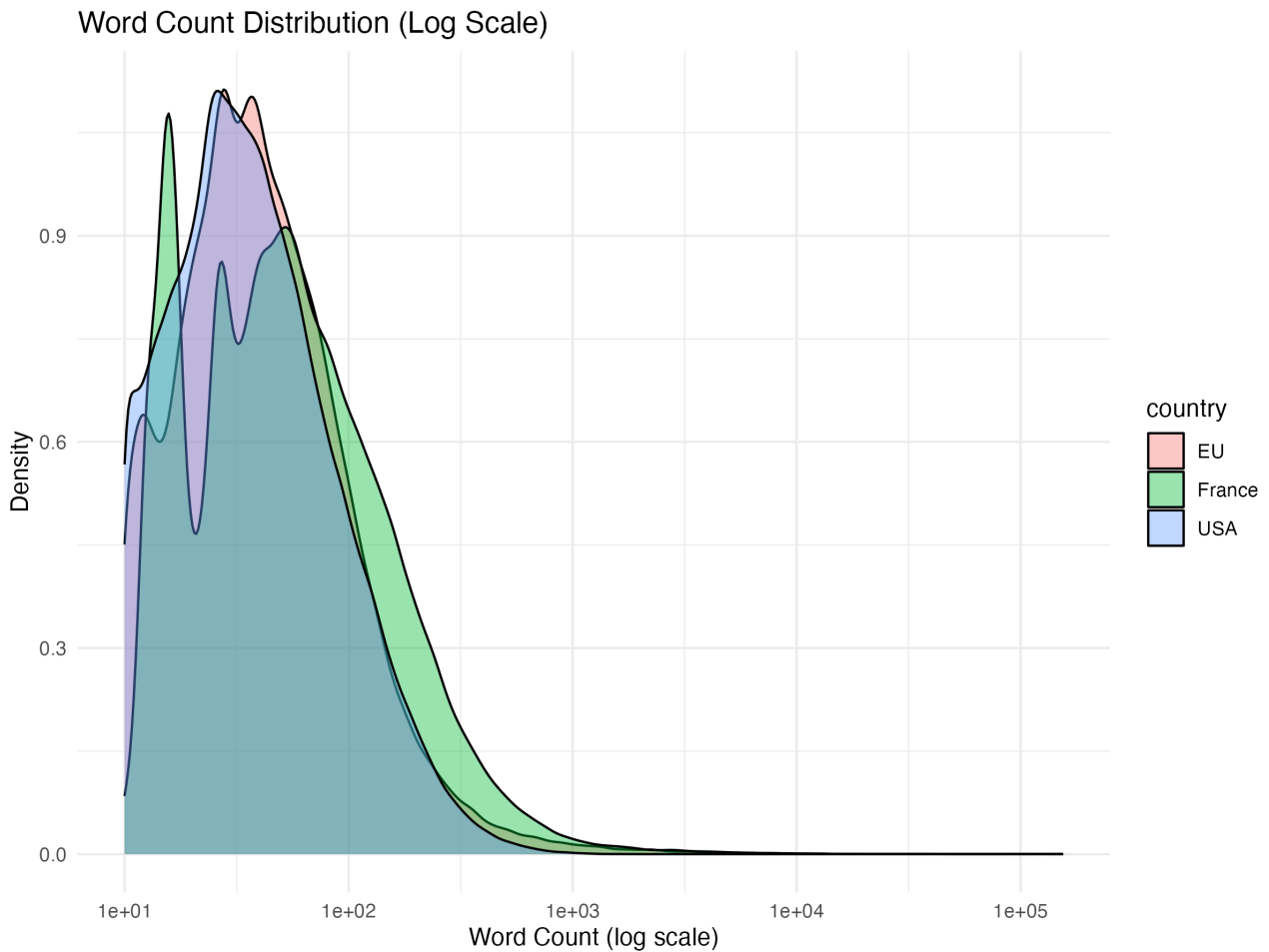


Figure 3.5: Density plot (log)

3.3.2 Trends

This subsection documents comparative differences in the use of secondary legislative embedding across subjects, countries, and years. The analysis at this stage is descriptive; formal hypothesis testing linking these patterns to the theoretical framework is presented subsequently.

Figures 3.8 and 3.6 plot the evolution of relative section length and semantic divergence over time. The trajectories do not move in parallel across jurisdictions. Instead, each country exhibits a distinct temporal pattern, suggesting that institutional and procedural features shape how secondary provisions are embedded in statutory text.

Several notable patterns emerge. First, the EU section length series drops to zero in 1966, reflecting the “Empty Chair Crisis,” during which very few legislative acts were adopted (Ludlow, 1999). Because the hiddenness measure is defined relative to the total number of sections within a bill, this sharp reduction in legislative activity mechanically produces a value of zero. By contrast, divergence is calculated relative to the bill’s title rather than its internal structure, and therefore does not exhibit the same discontinuity. As a result, this institutional interruption is clearly visible in the hiddenness series but largely muted in the divergence data.

Second, a sharp decline in semantic divergence in France is visible around 1989, coinciding with the establishment of the *Commission supérieure de codification*. This is a reform explicitly

intended to reduce fragmentation and inconsistency in statutory law (Cannarsa, 2022). The Commission’s mandate focused on harmonizing statutory language, consolidating dispersed provisions, and improving the internal coherence of legislation. A reduction in divergence following this reform is therefore substantively consistent with its stated objectives. The temporal alignment between institutional reform and a marked decline in divergence provides further external face validity for the measurement strategy.

A comparable, though less sustained, decline in divergence is observable in the United States around 1999, followed by a subsequent rebound. One possible interpretation links this pattern to the conclusion of the Clinton impeachment proceedings, which may have temporarily altered executive–legislative bargaining dynamics and reduced incentives for strategic embedding. The subsequent period, marked by the September 11 attacks, was characterized by exceptionally high issue salience, heightened public attention, and elevated presidential approval (Hall and Ross, 2015). Under such conditions, the political benefits of concealing secondary provisions may have diminished, as legislative action unfolded in a context of unified political focus and broad support for executive initiatives.

Notably, this period coincided with the passage of major legislative packages, including the USA PATRIOT Act and the Financial Services Modernization Act. The data indicate that these substantial statutory changes were associated with comparatively lower levels of semantic divergence. While this interpretation is necessarily speculative, it is consistent with the broader theoretical claim that high-salience political environments may reduce incentives for obfuscation. At the same time, the U.S. trajectory is less clearly tied to a single institutional reform than in the French case.

The EU series appears to stabilize following the expansion of the European Parliament’s legislative powers and the increasing formalization of legislative procedures (Maurer, 2003; Selck and Steunenbergh, 2004). This pattern is consistent with the interpretation that institutional consolidation is associated with more predictable modes of statutory embedding.

Across the full time horizon, the European Union displays consistently high levels of relative section length from the 1970s onward, with limited fluctuation after an early period of volatility. The United States, observed from the 1990s forward, shows similarly elevated but comparatively stable levels. France stands apart: its levels of hiddenness are lower overall and exhibit more pronounced medium-term variation, including a decline through the 1980s and 1990s followed by partial recovery in the 2000s.

Several institutional features may account for this French exception. First, the French legislative process operates within a semi-presidential system characterized by comparatively strong executive agenda control and more centralized drafting procedures. Government bills dominate the legislative agenda, and much of the technical drafting is conducted within the executive and reviewed by the Conseil d’État before parliamentary consideration. This centralized and bureaucratized drafting process may reduce the scope for embedding marginal provisions in lengthy, omnibus-style legislation, thereby lowering overall levels of Relative section length.

Second, France has historically maintained a stronger tradition of codification and doctrinal coherence in statutory law. The emphasis on systematic legal organization creates institutional incentives to structure legislation in a relatively transparent and internally ordered manner. The decline in hiddenness during the 1980s and 1990s is consistent with this interpretation, as it coincides with intensified codification initiatives and efforts to rationalize fragmented statutory frameworks. Such reforms likely constrained the proliferation of short, embedded provisions that contribute mechanically to higher hiddenness scores.

Third, parliamentary amendment practices differ across systems. Compared to the United States, where decentralized committee structures and permissive amendment rules facilitate the attachment of riders, and the European Union, where multi-level bargaining can generate complex compromise texts, French legislative bargaining may produce fewer structurally marginal add-ons. Although coalition dynamics and cohabitation periods introduce political contestation, the institutional architecture may limit the extent to which secondary provisions are appended in ways that substantially increase hiddenness.

Relative section length and semantic divergence evolve differently across jurisdictions. Rather than reflecting a common secular trend, the series suggest that national and supranational institutional contexts generate distinct equilibria in how secondary provisions are embedded within legislative text. This descriptive heterogeneity provides a foundation for the more formal empirical analysis that follows. Further, it demonstrates that these secondary policy strategies exhibit significant variation, lending further support to the importance of a proper theory to explain variation.

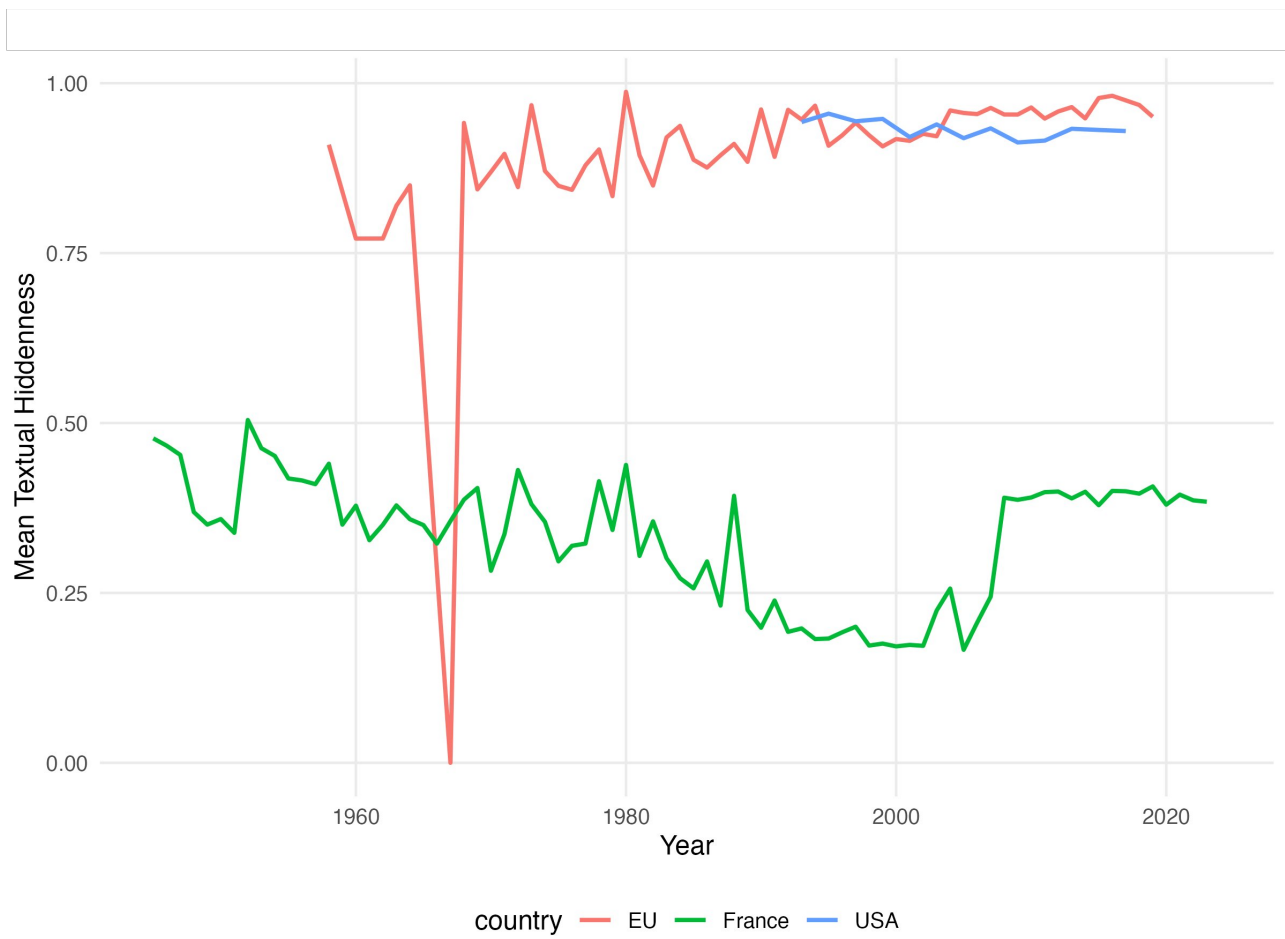


Figure 3.6: Textual Divergence over Time by Country

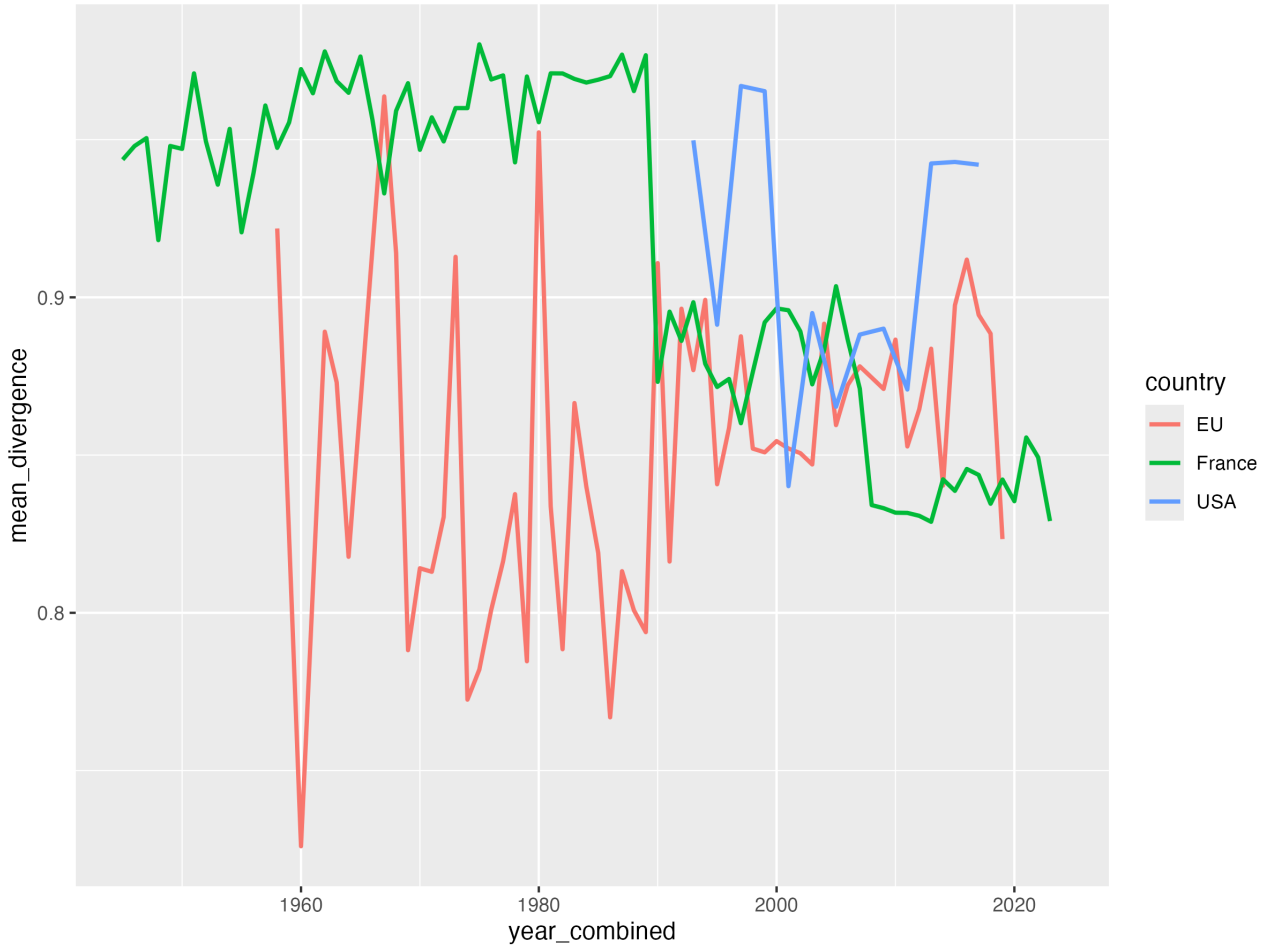


Figure 3.7: Divergence over Time by Country

Figure 3.8: Trends in Textual Divergence and Divergence Across Countries, 1945–Present

3.4 Party Effects

This section reports a descriptive exercise examining whether the topical composition of legislative sections differs systematically by the party in control. The aim is supplementary: to verify that the section-level classification scheme used throughout the thesis recovers partisan patterns broadly consistent with established issue ownership findings, and to document where title-level and section-level classifications diverge. Further, this section serves as a proof of concept for this measurement as an indication of government priorities beyond a simple focus on the headline of legislation.

I present binary partisan comparisons for three political contexts: EPP versus Socialists in the European Parliament, Republicans versus Democrats in the United States, and Gaullists versus Socialists in France. In Tables 3.1–3.3, a negative coefficient indicates that the first party in the comparison (EPP / Republican / Gaullist) is more likely to sponsor sections on that topic, while a positive coefficient indicates the second party (Socialist / Democrat / Socialist) is more likely to do so. To keep the presentation compact, each table reports only the five topics with the largest absolute partisan effects.

The U.S. results align with conventional expectations about party issue ownership (Table 3.1): Republicans are substantially more likely than Democrats to sponsor sections addressing agriculture, while Democrats are more likely to address energy, environment, immigration, and education. The European Parliament comparison (Table 3.2) likewise reveals distinct topical emphases, with the EPP more likely to sponsor sections on social policy, immigration, trade, and energy. These patterns should be read in light of the EPP’s sustained dominance during much of the sample period, which may mechanically amplify observed differences. The French case (Table 3.3) shows Gaullists more likely to sponsor sections on technology, health-care, taxation, and education, with Socialists more likely to emphasise energy; several of these differences are statistically significant at conventional levels.

Table 3.1: Top 5 section-topic partisan effects (pp), United States

Topic	Section effect
Agriculture	−4.82
Energy	4.01
Environment	2.66
Immigration	2.25
Education	2.15

Table 3.2: Top 5 section-topic partisan effects (pp), European Parliament

Topic	Section effect
Social	−10.22
Immigration	−7.94
Trade	−6.25
None	−6.01
Energy	−5.58

Table 3.3: Top 5 partisan effects, France: section vs. title classification

Topic	Section effect	Title effect
Technology	−9.80	−0.69
Healthcare	−4.96	0.22
Taxation	−4.73	−0.09
Energy	2.99	−0.55
Education	−2.10	0.33

Title- vs. section-level partisan effects. To assess whether partisan effects differ systematically between title-level (main subject) and section-level classifications, I compute an aggregated “Main – Section” difference test for each context. The results are reported jointly in Table 3.4. In both the U.S. and European Parliament samples, the difference is small and statistically indistinguishable from zero. In France, by contrast, the difference is positive and significant at conventional levels, indicating that partisan contrasts are more pronounced at the title level than at the section level.

Table 3.4: Aggregated difference in partisan effect (Main – Section), by context

Context	Estimate	SE	<i>p</i> -value
United States	−0.01	0.11	0.90
European Parliament	0.17	0.12	0.16
France	1.36	0.29	< 0.001

Interpretation. Taken together, these results indicate clear partisan specialisation in topical emphasis across all three political systems, with the section-level classifier recovering the patterns one would expect from the issue ownership literature (Petrocik, 1996; Egan, 2013). The U.S. coefficients in particular reproduce well-documented partisan stylised facts: Republican overrepresentation in agricultural sections is consistent with the rural geography of the party’s electoral base and its traditional dominance of farm-bill negotiations, while Democratic overrepresentation in environmental, energy, and education sections mirrors the post-1990s realignment of these issues toward the Democratic coalition (Karol, 2009; Layman, 2002). That the section-level classifier recovers these patterns at the magnitudes reported, 4-5 percentage points for the largest U.S. effects, without being trained on any partisan information provides reassurance that the classification scheme is picking up substantively meaningful variation rather than noise.

The European Parliament results are harder to read at face value. The EPP’s apparent overrepresentation across social, immigration, trade, and energy sections is consistent with its long-standing centrality to the legislative agenda, but the magnitudes (between 5.6 and 10.2 percentage points) are larger than the U.S. effects despite a less polarised institutional context. This most likely reflects the mechanical influence of EPP dominance during much of the sample period: when one party is consistently in or close to the rapporteur position, a binary comparison overstates differences in topical emphasis relative to a setting with more balanced agenda control. These coefficients are therefore not the result of distinctive EPP priorities.

The most substantively interesting result is the cross-context comparison in Table 3.4. The aggregated difference between title-level and section-level partisan effects is essentially zero in the United States and the European Parliament, but reaches 1.36 percentage points ($p < 0.001$) in France. Two readings are available, and they are not mutually exclusive. The first is institutional: French bills are typically drafted under strong executive agenda control and reviewed by the Conseil d’État before parliamentary consideration, a process that tends to produce concise, programmatically framed titles attached to long, technically heterogeneous bodies. Under that drafting convention, the title-level classifier captures the political signal that the government wishes to project, while the section-level classifier picks up a more diluted mix of technical implementation provisions that are less partisan in character. The second is substantive: the French gap is consistent with the broader argument developed in this thesis that legislative content is partitioned into a visible upper layer that does political work and a lower layer of secondary provisions whose partisan profile is more attenuated. France appears to be the cleanest empirical case of this partition, but the framework would predict that some

version of the same gap should emerge in any system where bills are used both as electoral signals and as bargaining vehicles.

That the U.S. and European Parliament gaps are statistically indistinguishable from zero does not, on this reading, falsify the broader argument. In a polarised two-party system, partisan signalling permeates the entire bill rather than concentrating at the top, so titles and sections move together. Further, the interest groups they cater to could have partisan leanings. The NRA holds more sway over the Republicans than the Democrats (Lacombe, 2021). In the European Parliament, fragmented agenda control and the necessity of cross-group compromise compress observable partisan differences at both levels, making any title-vs.-section gap difficult to detect. The French case is, in this sense, the context in which the title-section partition is most observable rather than the only context in which it operates. Disentangling these mechanisms more rigorously would require comparable text-level coverage of additional polities; the present results should be read as suggestive rather than conclusive on this point.

Two caveats should be flagged. First, these comparisons are bivariate: they do not control for time period, policy domain, or institutional configuration, and the partisan attribution itself is coarse, since legislation is almost always produced through coalitional or cross-party processes rather than by a single party acting unilaterally. Second, the section classifier prioritises precision over recall, so attenuated partisan effects at the section level may partly reflect the conservatism of the classification scheme rather than genuine substantive convergence. With those caveats in mind, the descriptive findings here serve their intended dual purpose: they offer a face-validity check on the classification procedure introduced in Section 3.1.1, and they motivate the more focused attention given to title-level salience in the empirical chapters that follow.

3.4.1 Policy Subject Effects

I examine whether the use of secondary legislative embedding varies systematically across policy areas. This analysis serves two purposes. First, it assesses whether variation across subjects is sufficiently large to challenge the validity of pooling observations across policy domains. Second, it provides an initial indication of which types of policies exhibit higher or lower levels of divergence and section length.

Appendix G regress relative section length and semantic divergence on the policy area assigned to a section, the policy area assigned to its parent title, and both jointly. Immigration is used as the reference category.

A first observation is that subject effects are markedly stronger at the title level than at the section level. In the hiddenness regressions, almost every title-level coefficient in Panel B is negative and statistically significant relative to immigration, with magnitudes ranging from roughly -0.02 to -0.25 . Section-level coefficients in Panel A, by contrast, rarely exceed 0.012 in absolute value once the unclassified residual category is excluded. The same asymmetry recurs in the divergence regressions, where title-level coefficients are an order of magnitude larger than their section-level counterparts. The topic announced in a bill's title is therefore

a substantially better predictor of structural heterogeneity than the topic of the individual section. Substantively, this is consistent with the theoretical argument that the visible framing of legislation, rather than its internal partition, generates the strategic incentive to embed marginal provisions.

The two measures, however, behave quite differently across subjects. Bills whose principal subject is justice (-0.25), education (-0.18), housing (-0.16), defence (-0.16) or agriculture (-0.16) exhibit substantially lower hiddenness than immigration legislation, yet many of these same domains display higher divergence: title-level divergence coefficients are positive and significant for environment (0.016), justice (0.016), labour (0.014) and defence (0.012). Immigration bills therefore appear to combine a high count of short embedded provisions with comparatively close textual alignment between section and title, while bills in other domains contain fewer but more topically distinct sections. The two operationalisations capture related but non-equivalent forms of disjointedness, and the policy-subject results provide a useful descriptive reminder of this distinction.

Two substantive readings of this asymmetry are worth noting. First, immigration is a chronically high-salience domain in all three jurisdictions, and bills that announce immigration as their primary purpose draw sustained organised opposition. The combination of high hiddenness and low divergence is consistent with policymakers absorbing pressure through structural compression of secondary content rather than through topical drift, as topically incongruent additions would be most likely to attract scrutiny precisely in this kind of legislation. Second, broad-mandate areas such as environment, defence and labour appear to function as thematic umbrellas under which substantively unrelated provisions can be more easily housed. Sections within tightly drafted health and tax legislation, by contrast, remain close to their announced topic: the largest negative section-level divergence coefficients are recorded for health (-0.022), taxation (-0.010) and education (-0.008).

It is also worth noting the behaviour of the unclassified “None” category, which exhibits substantially lower hiddenness (-0.41 at the section level) and higher divergence than any substantively coded subject. This is mechanically expected: sections that fail to match any keyword bundle tend to be either very short technical clauses or unusually generic provisions that diverge from any specific umbrella topic. Their behaviour serves as a useful sanity check on the classification scheme rather than as a substantive finding.

Taken together, the two tables describe a coherent topical structure to disjointed legislation, suggesting that pooling across policy subject is appropriate.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter evaluates the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework against the empirical evidence. Before presenting the models, Section 4.1 restates the full set of hypotheses derived in Chapter 2 and outlines the empirical strategy used to evaluate them. The analysis then proceeds in four stages. Section 4.2 describes the measurement used of the two principal independent variables, issue salience and lobbying expenditure, alongside the key controls. Section 4.3 presents results for the first dependent variable, semantic divergence, including the baseline fixed effects model and the marginal effects analysis. Section 4.4 repeats this analysis for the second dependent variable, relative section length. Section 4.5 reports further robustness tests, including an electoral timing analysis and a replication at the legislation level.

4.1 Hypotheses and Evaluation Strategy

The theoretical framework generates four testable claims. They are restated here to provide a clear reference point for the empirical discussion that follows.

H1 (Salience, nonlinear). The relationship between issue salience and the use of secondary policymaking instruments follows an inverted U-shaped curve. At very low levels of salience, policymakers face minimal electoral costs from openly advancing lobby-favoured provisions and have little reason to employ concealment. As salience rises into a middle range, the risk of voter detection increases sufficiently to make concealment attractive, producing a rise in divergence and hiddenness. At very high levels of salience, however, the probability of detection becomes so great that attempts at obfuscation are counterproductive, and reliance on secondary instruments declines. Because the sign of any linear estimate of this relationship depends on where in the distribution the sample is concentrated, H1a does not uniquely predict a positive or negative coefficient on a linear salience term; it predicts a significant negative coefficient on the quadratic term together with an interior maximum.

H2 (Lobbying, positive). Higher lobbying expenditure is positively associated with both semantic divergence and Relative section length. Legislators who receive greater financial support from organised interests have stronger incentives to accommodate those interests through less visible legislative channels.

H3a (Interaction: lobbying attenuated by salience). The marginal effect of lobbying expenditure on divergence and hiddenness diminishes in higher salience issues. As salience rises, policymakers bear a higher electoral cost per unit of hidden content, reducing the political space in which lobbying can translate into obfuscatory legislation. At sufficiently high salience levels, even well-resourced lobbies are unable to sustain hidden provisions.

H3b (Interaction: salience attenuated by lobbying). The mirror-image hypothesis holds that the effect of salience on obfuscation is weakened when lobbying expenditure is high. In environments of potential regulatory capture, legislators may discount the electoral risk of concealment because the costs of defying dominant interest groups exceed the expected electoral penalty.

Together, H3a and H3b imply a substitutive interaction: the marginal influence of each variable diminishes as the other becomes sufficiently large. The empirical strategy evaluates each hypothesis in turn, using the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the relevant coefficients and marginal effects as the primary criteria for assessment.

4.2 Independent Variables

4.2.1 Issue Salience

The theoretical argument assigns a central role to issue salience. H1a predicts a nonlinear relationship between salience and the use of secondary policymaking instruments, while H2 and H3a both make conditional claims about the level and marginal effect of salience. Accurate measurement is therefore important.

I employ two complementary operationalizations of salience. The first is drawn from the Most Important Problem Dataset (MIPD; Heffington et al., 2019), which aggregates Gallup-style survey responses in which citizens identify the issue they consider most important at a given point in time. This measure captures mass-level salience and reflects the distribution of public attention across policy domains. The second measure is derived from the Manifesto Project dataset (MARPOR; Lehmann et al., 2025), which systematically codes the relative emphasis parties assign to different issue categories in their electoral manifestos. This operationalizes elite-level agenda prioritization and reflects how prominently issues feature in competitive party competition.

Using both measures is important for two reasons. First, salience is a conceptually multidimensional construct whose measurement remains contested (Epstein and Segal, 2000; Wlezien, 2005). Mass public attention and elite agenda prioritization need not move in lockstep, particularly in systems with strong gatekeeping parties or during periods of issue dealignment. Employing both measures therefore provides a more complete picture of the salience environment in which policymaking occurs. Second, using alternative operationalizations across separate specifications provides a natural robustness check on the salience results. This is especially relevant when recalling that for the thesis, salience is a combination of attention paid to an issue and clarity of the voter signal.

Table 4.1: Top 5 section topics by mean standardized salience (1945–2020)

Country	Section Topic	Mean Standardized Salience
EU	environment	-0.36
EU	energy	-0.39
EU	taxation	-0.39
EU	housing	-0.39
EU	social	-0.40
France	criminal	-0.46
France	environment	-0.46
France	immigration	-0.46
France	defense	-0.46
France	education	-0.46
USA	education	-0.44
USA	criminal	-0.44
USA	finance	-0.44
USA	healthcare	-0.44
USA	housing	-0.44

To align these data with the legislative corpus, I map issue categories from both the MIPD and MARPOR onto the section-level topic classification used in the legislative data and Table 4.2.1 benchmarks the MIPD measure against MARPOR for the United States.

To give a descriptive sense of the salience measurement, Table 4.2.1 reports the five highest-salience section topics in each jurisdiction, averaged across the postwar period.

Figure 4.1 plots the evolution of issue salience over time. The series make clear that salience is not a static property of an issue: each topic exhibits substantial within-issue variation across the seventy-five-year window, with visible peaks tracking well-known agenda shocks (e.g., energy in the 1970s in the EU and crime shortly after 9/11). This temporal heterogeneity is precisely the kind of variation H1a requires in order to be tested, since identifying a nonlinear effect of salience on obfuscation depends on observing the same issue at different points along the salience distribution. The figure also shows that the cross-country trajectories are not synchronized, which is reassuring: it suggests that the measure is picking up jurisdiction-specific attention rather than a global news cycle common to all three corpora.

The descriptives are presented below.

Two patterns are worth noting. First, the topic rankings are substantively plausible: the EU’s most salient categories (environment, energy, taxation, housing, social) align with the policy areas in which Brussels has accreted competence over time; France’s top categories foreground domestic distributive and security concerns (criminal justice, environment, immigration, defense, education); and the United States’ top categories load on the bread-and-butter regulatory and welfare domains (education, criminal justice, finance, healthcare, housing). Second, the standardized scores themselves are tightly clustered within each country, indicating that the salience distribution is relatively flat at the top: a handful of issues compete for primacy rather than a single topic dominating the agenda.

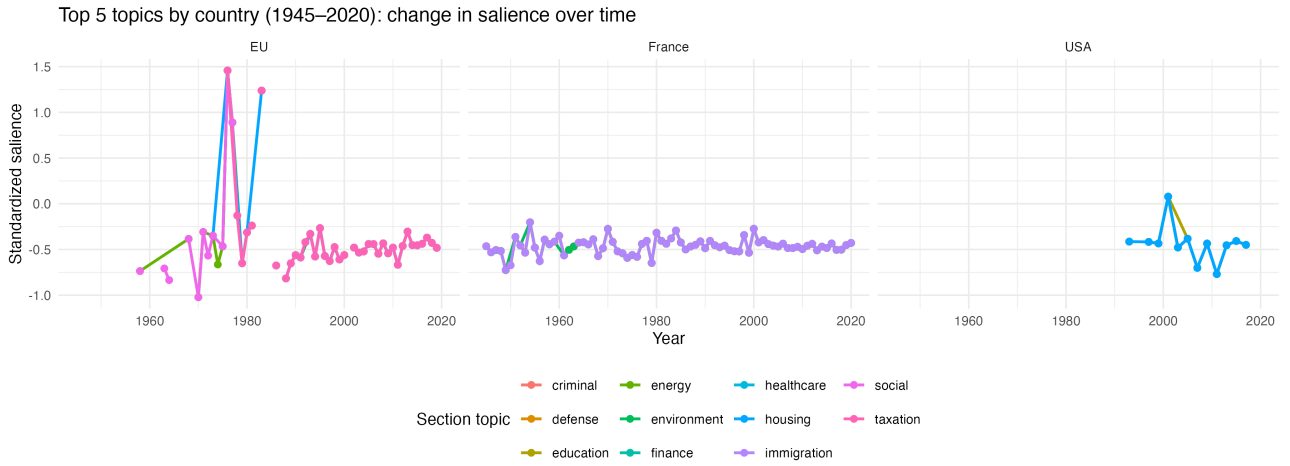


Figure 4.1: Top 5 topics by country (1945–2020): change in salience over time.

Figure 4.1 plots the evolution of these top-five topics over time. The series make clear that salience is not a static property of an issue: each topic exhibits substantial within-issue variation across the seventy-five-year window, with visible peaks tracking well-known agenda shocks (e.g., energy in the 1970s, finance around the 2008 crisis, immigration in the 2010s in France). This temporal heterogeneity is precisely the kind of variation H1a requires in order to be tested, since identifying a nonlinear effect of salience on obfuscation depends on observing the same issue at different points along the salience distribution. The figure also shows that the cross-country trajectories are not synchronized, which is reassuring: it suggests that the measure is picking up jurisdiction-specific attention rather than a global news cycle common to all three corpora.

To assess whether the two operationalizations converge on a common construct, Table 4.2.1 compares the issue-level standardized scores from MIPD and MARPOR for the United States, the case in which both series are most fully observed.

Table 4.2: Comparison of issue salience (USA): MIPD vs. MARPOR

Issue	MIPD	MARPOR
education	-0.44	-0.39
criminal	-0.44	-0.41
finance	-0.44	-0.36
healthcare	-0.44	-0.43
housing	-0.44	-0.38
Correlation (r)	0.94***	

Note: Entries are standardized salience scores. The correlation reports the Pearson correlation between MIPD and MARPOR across issues. *** $p < 0.01$.

The two indicators track each other closely at the issue level, with a Pearson correlation of $r = 0.94$ ($p < 0.01$). This strong association suggests that mass-level attention and elite-level agenda prioritization, while conceptually distinct, move in tandem across the policy domains

relevant to the legislative corpus. Two implications follow. Substantively, the convergence indicates that the salience environment in which legislators operate is reasonably coherent: voters and parties prioritize roughly the same issues, even if they may weight them differently at the margin.

4.2.2 Lobbying Expenditure

The theoretical expectation is that greater lobbying activity is positively associated with higher levels of both semantic divergence and relative section length (H2). To evaluate this, I use sector-level lobbying expenditures in the United States from OpenSecrets, covering the years 2000 to 2020. These data are among the most complete and consistently coded longitudinal records of organized interest spending available for any jurisdiction.

Comparable longitudinal data for the European Union and France are not consistently available (Dür, 2008). To partially address this limitation, I incorporate aggregate sector-level lobbying data for the European Union covering the period 2020–2025, as reported by Corporate Europe Observatory and LobbyControl (2025). Because these observations fall outside the temporal scope of the main dataset, they are not directly comparable to the historical series. I therefore construct average sectoral measures over this period, which capture relative lobbying intensity across sectors rather than year-to-year variation.

As with the salience measures, sectoral lobbying expenditures are matched to legislation and section topics, enabling the construction of issue-specific measures of lobbying activity. This matching procedure ensures that spending is aligned with the substantive policy areas under analysis, providing a consistent basis for comparison across countries despite differences in data structure and availability.

Given the substantial data limitations outside the United States, the lobbying results should be interpreted with appropriate caution. Cross-national variation in lobbying coverage remains a constraint on the analysis, and improving the comparability of organized interest data across systems is an important direction for future work. The importance of better data on interest group power and lobbying expenditure has been echoed widely (de Figueiredo and Richter, 2014).

4.3 Results: Semantic Divergence

4.3.1 Baseline Fixed Effects Model

I begin with a baseline fixed effects model and then turn to a marginal effects analysis to more clearly illustrate the interaction between the key explanatory variables. The fixed effects specification provides a parsimonious estimate of the average within-unit relationships, controlling for unobserved heterogeneity across units and common temporal shocks. However, interaction terms in nonlinear or panel settings can be difficult to interpret directly from coefficient estimates alone.

To address this, I complement the baseline model with a marginal effects analysis that evaluates how the effect of one variable varies across different levels of the other. This approach allows for a more transparent and substantively meaningful interpretation of the interaction, directly linking the empirical results to the theoretical expectations outlined above. The baseline fixed effects model takes the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Divergence}_{it} = & \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Salience}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Salience}_{it}^2 + \beta_3 \text{LobbySpending}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{Salience}_{it} * \text{LobbySpending}_{it} \\ & + \sum_j \beta_j \text{Confounder}_{jit} + \delta_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}. \end{aligned} \tag{4.1}$$

The coefficients β_1 and β_2 capture the associations between issue salience and sector-level lobbying expenditures, respectively, and the dependent variable. The country fixed effects δ_{it} account for institutional difference shocks across periods, including macroeconomic conditions or shifts in the broader political environment. Standard errors are clustered at the issue level to account for serial correlation within policy domains. The subscripts x_{it} demonstrate that variation is on both an issue and a year level. The country fixed effects are used to control for part of the institutional variation.

Asides from country fixed effect, I estimate with the controls for split government, majority size and bill areas touched.

The three controls included in the baseline specification address distinct sources of potential confounding. Majority size addresses the bargaining logic of coalition government: a governing coalition with a thin or fractured majority must negotiate more extensively to pass legislation, which may independently produce more disjointed bills as side-payments and amendments accumulate during drafting. Bill areas touched is included as a structural control for the mechanical relationship between policy scope and the divergence measure: Bills that span multiple issue areas will by construction exhibit higher TF-IDF cosine divergence from their title, since no single topical vocabulary can adequately describe the full content. Failing to account for this would conflate strategic obfuscation with the incidental complexity of broad-scope legislation. Finally, split government captures the institutional constraint imposed when the executive and legislature are controlled by opposing parties or coalitions. Under divided government, the executive may have stronger incentives to embed concessions and side-payments within legislation to secure passage, independently of lobbying pressure or issue salience. Additional potential controls such as economic conditions, and chamber-level institutional variables were not incorporated due to data availability constraints across the three legislative systems studied. However, country fixed effects should capture some of that variation. Especially those that relate to institutional expectations.

Due to the limited data availability for lobbying expenditure. The measurement does not have variation across split government. This prevents their simultaneous identification in fixed-effects models. Following standard practice, I therefore estimate separate specifications including each variable to assess their independent associations with the outcome.¹

¹See Achen (2002) for a discussion of identification problems arising from collinearity and the use of alternative model specifications.

Dependent Variable: Model:	Divergence vs. Title			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Variables</i>				
Section salience	0.0174*** (0.0024)	-0.0014 (0.0065)	0.0164*** (0.0028)	0.0159*** (0.0026)
Lobbying	0.0105** (0.0037)		0.0107** (0.0043)	0.0102** (0.0039)
Split government		0.1084*** (0.0053)		
Section salience ²	-0.0026*** (0.0006)	-0.0001 (0.0016)	-0.0023** (0.0007)	-0.0025*** (0.0006)
Salience × Lobbying			-0.0070*** (0.0015)	-0.0068*** (0.0014)
Majority size	-0.0009* (0.0005)	-0.0012** (0.0005)	-0.0010* (0.0005)	
Bill areas touched	0.0063*** (0.0012)	0.0061*** (0.0011)	0.0064*** (0.0012)	
<i>Controls</i>				
Split government	No	Yes	No	No
Majority size	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Bill areas touched	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Fixed-effects</i>				
country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>				
Observations	62,497	197,871	62,497	62,497
R ²	0.04260	0.10460	0.04320	0.04120
Within R ²	0.00760	0.09970	0.00810	0.00695

Clustered (section_topic) standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table 4.3.1 presents the estimates. I begin by evaluating the evidence for H1.

H1: Nonlinear salience effect (inverted U-shape). In the simplest specifications, salience enters with a positive and statistically significant coefficient, while the squared term is negative and significant, holding lobbying consistent. This pattern is consistent with H1a: divergence rises with salience at lower levels of attention but decelerates as salience becomes large. The negative sign on the quadratic term indicates a concave relationship, consistent with an interior maximum. However, once the full set of control variables is included (Model 2, estimated without lobbying due to data availability constraints), both the linear and quadratic salience terms lose statistical significance. The evidence for a nonlinear salience effect is therefore present in the simpler specifications but sensitive to the inclusion of additional controls. H1a receives partial support: the sign pattern is consistent with the inverted-U prediction, but the relationship is not robust across all specifications.

H2: Lobbying positively associated with divergence. The coefficient on lobbying expenditure is positive and statistically significant across the specifications in which lobbying data are available, holding salience constant. A one standard deviation increase in sectoral lobbying is associated with a statistically significant increase in divergence, consistent with H2 and H3. This finding holds across both broad and restrictive issue classification schemes and across US-only and combined US–EU samples, indicating reasonable robustness to measurement decisions.

Interaction (H3a and H3b). The interaction between salience and lobbying is negative and statistically significant in the baseline models. This negative interaction has a direct bearing on H3a: the marginal effect of salience on divergence is decreasing in lobbying, and conversely the marginal effect of lobbying is decreasing in salience. Both mechanisms appear to operate as substitutes, consistent with H3a and, to the extent that the effect of salience is dampened at high lobbying levels, with H3b as well. The direct coefficient estimates are discussed in more detail through the marginal effects analysis in Section 4.3.2.

Split government. The coefficient on split government is positive and statistically significant across specifications, and its magnitude is comparatively large. This finding is consistent with the theoretical expectation that institutional fragmentation increases legislative complexity and raises the incentive to distribute policy content across less visible provisions. This result supplements the main hypotheses as a robustness check on the controls specification. The strong correlation between previous findings in the literature and the measurements provides additional face validity to the measure.

4.3.2 Marginal Effects Analysis

Given the difficulty of interpreting interaction terms directly in fixed effects models, I estimate marginal effects that evaluate the conditional relationship between salience and lobbying more transparently. For each variable in turn, I compute its marginal effect on divergence at low, medium, and high levels of the other variable, defined as one standard deviation below the mean, the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean. I additionally report estimates at the 95th percentile to capture the upper tail of the distribution.

The results are presented in Table 4.3.2 and provide the most direct evidence on H3a and H3b.

H3a: Marginal effect of lobbying decreasing in salience. The marginal effect of lobbying on divergence is positive and significant at low and medium levels of salience. As salience rises to high levels, the estimated marginal effect of lobbying declines in magnitude and loses statistical significance. At the 95th percentile of salience, the effect of lobbying becomes small and statistically indistinguishable from zero. This pattern is consistent with H3a: higher salience attenuates the influence of lobbying on divergence.

Table 4.3: Marginal effects of salience and lobbying on divergence between text and title

	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p-value
Panel A: Effect of salience at different levels of lobbying					
Lobbying = Low (-1 SD)	0.017	0.002	0.013	0.021	0.000
Lobbying = Mean (0)	0.009	0.001	0.006	0.012	0.000
Lobbying = High (+1 SD)	0.001	0.002	-0.003	0.005	0.604
Lobbying = 95th percentile	-0.010	0.004	-0.018	-0.002	0.010
Panel B: Effect of lobbying at different levels of salience					
Salience = Low (-1 SD)	0.020	0.005	0.011	0.030	0.000
Salience = Mean (0)	0.012	0.005	0.002	0.023	0.016
Salience = High (+1 SD)	0.005	0.006	-0.007	0.016	0.434
Salience = 95th percentile	-0.003	0.007	-0.016	0.010	0.662

H3b: Marginal effect of salience decreasing in lobbying. The marginal effect of salience on divergence likewise diminishes as lobbying intensity increases. At low levels of lobbying, salience retains a positive and significant marginal effect. This is in line with the baseline specification where the linear effect is positive, suggesting that at low and medium levels of salience the baseline model does a good job of capturing the result. As lobbying rises to its upper tail, the marginal effect of salience becomes negative and statistically significant. This finding, where very high lobbying is associated with a reversal of the salience effect, extends beyond the strict prediction of H3b, which anticipated only a dampening rather than a sign reversal. The pattern nonetheless falls within the broader substitutive logic of the theoretical framework: the two mechanisms do not operate independently, and each constrains the other.

The marginal effects analysis therefore lends clear support to H3a and partial support to H3b for the divergence outcome. The fact that salience becomes negatively associated with divergence at extreme levels of lobbying is a noteworthy, even if it goes beyond the prediction.

4.4 Results: Relative section length

4.4.1 Baseline Fixed Effects Model

I next estimate the same set of baseline specifications with relative section length as the dependent variable. This outcome captures the structural positional prominence of sections within legislation and is thus a distinct empirical indicator of the use of secondary instruments. The baseline specification remains:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Relative section length}_{it} = & \alpha \\
 & + \beta_1 \text{Salience}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Salience}_{it}^2 \\
 & + \beta_3 \text{LobbySpending}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{Salience}_{it} \text{LobbySpending}_{it} \\
 & + \sum_j \beta_j \text{Confounder}_{j,it} + \delta_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}.
 \end{aligned} \tag{4.2}$$

Dependent Variable: Model:	Relative Section Length			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Variables</i>				
Section salience	0.0054* (0.0024)	-0.0238 (0.0192)	0.0049* (0.0024)	0.0046* (0.0023)
Lobbying	0.0019 (0.0022)		0.0020 (0.0022)	0.0018 (0.0021)
Split government		0.0772*** (0.0125)		
Section salience ²	-0.0007 (0.0006)	0.0043 (0.0034)	-0.0006 (0.0006)	-0.0007 (0.0006)
Salience × Lobbying			-0.0030** (0.0013)	-0.0028** (0.0012)
Majority size	-0.0004 (0.0003)	-0.0006* (0.0003)	-0.0005 (0.0003)	
Bill areas touched	0.0021** (0.0009)	0.0020** (0.0009)	0.0022** (0.0009)	
<i>Controls</i>				
Split government	No	Yes	No	No
Majority size	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Bill areas touched	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
<i>Fixed-effects</i>				
country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>				
Observations	62,497	197,874	62,497	62,497
R ²	0.04410	0.19160	0.04445	0.04280
Within R ²	0.00250	0.01270	0.00285	0.00210

Clustered (section_topic) standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table 4.4.1 presents the estimates.

H1 Salience enters the baseline hiddenness models with a positive and marginally significant coefficient (significant at the 90% confidence level) in the simplest specification, holding lobbying constant. However, this association is not stable: once additional controls or alternative salience measures are introduced, the effect of salience becomes small and statistically indistinguishable from zero across specifications. The quadratic term for salience is likewise inconsistent and does not produce a stable pattern indicative of the predicted inverted-U shape. H1 is not confirmed for relative section length.

H2: Lobbying and hiddenness. The coefficient on lobbying expenditure is positive, holding salience constant, across specifications but does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance in the baseline models. The lobbying results for hiddenness are therefore weaker than those observed for divergence. H2 is not confirmed through the baseline fixed effects

Table 4.4: Marginal effects of salience and lobbying at varying levels of the interacting variable

	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p-value
Panel A: Effect of salience at different levels of lobbying					
Lobbying = Low (-1 SD)	0.006	0.002	0.003	0.010	0.001
Lobbying = Mean (0)	0.003	0.001	0.002	0.005	0.000
Lobbying = High (+1 SD)	0.000	0.001	-0.002	0.002	0.881
Lobbying = 95th percentile	-0.005	0.003	-0.011	0.001	0.100
Panel B: Effect of lobbying at different levels of salience					
Salience = Low (-1 SD)	0.006	0.003	0.000	0.011	0.048
Salience = Mean (0)	0.002	0.002	-0.002	0.007	0.314
Salience = High (+1 SD)	-0.001	0.003	-0.006	0.004	0.737
Salience = 95th percentile	-0.004	0.003	-0.010	0.003	0.242

estimates for relative section length.

Interaction (H3a, H3b). Despite the generally weak main effects, the interaction between salience and lobbying is negative and statistically significant in the hiddenness models. The sign, direction, and approximate magnitude of this interaction are closely comparable to those observed in the divergence specifications, suggesting that a similar substitutive dynamic operates for both outcomes. High lobbying pressure is associated with attenuated influence of salience on hiddenness. When salience is high, the influence of lobbying is reduced. This provides support for H3a and H3b even in a context where the direct effects of salience and lobbying individually are not robustly identified.

Split government. The coefficient on split government is positive and statistically significant across hiddenness specifications, and its magnitude is substantial. This finding mirrors the divergence results and reinforces the conclusion that institutional fragmentation is an empirically important correlate of the use of secondary legislative instruments, complementing the hypothesized role of salience and lobbying.

4.4.2 Marginal Effects Analysis

To estimate the conditional relationships implied by the interaction model, I compute marginal effects of salience and lobbying at representative values of the conditioning variable. The marginal effects table evaluates each variable at low (1 SD), mean, and high (+1 SD) levels of the other, as well as at the 95th percentile. Table 4.4.2 reports these estimates for section length.

Table 4.4.2 presents the marginal effects for the divergence.

H3a: Marginal effect of lobbying decreasing in salience. For divergence, the marginal effect of lobbying declines as salience rises, consistent with H3a. At low and medium levels

of salience, lobbying is positively and significantly associated with divergence. At high levels of salience, the marginal effect of lobbying is smaller and loses statistical significance. This pattern mirrors the divergence results, providing parallel support for H3a across both dependent variables.

H3b: Marginal effect of salience decreasing in lobbying. As with H3a, the marginal effect of salience on divergence diminishes as lobbying intensity increases. However, in contrast to the divergence findings, the marginal effect of salience does not become significantly negative at extreme levels of lobbying. The substitutive relationship is present but less pronounced for divergence: the dampening of salience’s influence is observed, but the sign reversal seen in the divergence models does not replicate for this outcome. H3b is therefore supported for divergence.

The same marginal effect model for relative section length gives:

H3a: Marginal effect of lobbying decreasing in salience. For section length, the marginal effect of lobbying declines as salience rises, consistent with H3a. At low levels of salience, lobbying is positively and statistically significantly associated with hiddenness. At mean levels of salience, the effect is smaller and no longer statistically distinguishable from zero. At high levels of salience, the estimated effect is close to zero and remains statistically insignificant. This pattern indicates a clear attenuation of the effect of lobbying as salience increases, providing support for H3a.

H3b: Marginal effect of salience decreasing in lobbying. The marginal effect of salience on section length likewise diminishes as lobbying intensity increases, consistent with H3b. At low and average levels of lobbying, salience is positively and significantly associated with hiddenness. At high levels of lobbying, the effect is effectively zero and statistically insignificant. However, in contrast to the divergence results, the marginal effect of salience does not turn negative at high levels of lobbying. The results therefore indicate a weakening of salience’s effect as lobbying increases, but without a reversal in sign. H3b is thus supported for section length.

Summary across outcomes. Taken together, the baseline and marginal effects results reveal a consistent contrast between the two dependent variables. Semantic divergence is positively and significantly associated with lobbying across multiple specifications and temporal horizons, and the marginal effects analysis confirms the predicted substitutive interaction between salience and lobbying (H3a and H3b). Relative section length tells a more mixed story: lobbying’s positive association with hiddenness is confirmed in the long-run ECM but not in the baseline fixed effects, and the interaction pattern is directionally consistent but weaker. In neither case does salience emerge as a robust direct predictor of either outcome (H1a, H2a), though it plays a role through its interaction with lobbying.

4.5 Further Tests

4.5.1 Marginal effects

Since the theoretical prediction of salience conceptualized a U-curve, it is important to see if that U curve also holds in the marginal effects table. An alternative marginal effect estimation focuses on whether the quadratic effect of salience holds in the marginal effects table. 4.5.1 reports marginal effects from an alternative specification that augments the baseline model (4.4.2 by including a quadratic term in salience and its interaction with lobbying. This allows the effect of salience to vary nonlinearly across its range. The results, however, closely mirror those obtained in the linear specification.

Including a quadratic term does not change the pattern where salience loses its significance at a high and very high level of lobbying. At the point of lobby level expenditure of one standard deviation below the mean, a one-unit increase in salience is associated with a 0.028 increase in divergence ($p < 0.001$). At mean levels of lobbying, the effect remains positive but smaller in magnitude (0.016, $p < 0.001$). At high levels of lobbying (one standard deviation above the mean), the effect of salience is close to zero and not statistically distinguishable from zero (0.004, $p = 0.555$). These estimates are substantively similar to those reported in the baseline model.

Second, the marginal effect of lobbying continues to exhibit the same conditional pattern across levels of salience. When salience is low, lobbying has a positive and statistically significant effect on divergence (0.024, $p = 0.010$). At mean levels of salience, the effect remains positive but is reduced in magnitude (0.012, $p = 0.011$). At high levels of salience, the estimated effect of lobbying is effectively zero and not statistically significant (0.000, $p = 0.978$). Again, these results are consistent with those from the linear specification.

Finally, despite the inclusion of a quadratic term in salience, the estimated marginal effects of salience do not vary across different levels of salience when holding lobbying constant. This indicates that the additional nonlinear component does not materially alter the estimated relationship within the observed range of the data.

This pattern may reflect the correlation between lobbying and salience. As a result, the marginal effects of salience are, to some extent, conditioned on its relationship with lobbying. In this case, the nonlinear effect is less apparent in the marginal effects specification, as the variation across different levels already captures the underlying nonlinearity rather than expressing it through an explicit functional form.

Table 4.5: Linear effects of salience conditional on lobbying

Panel A: Linear Effect of Salience ($\partial Y/\partial \text{Salience}$)					
Lobbying level	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p-value
Low (-1 SD)	0.028	0.007	0.013	0.043	0.000
Mean (0)	0.016	0.003	0.010	0.022	0.000
High (+1 SD)	0.004	0.007	-0.009	0.017	0.555
<i>Effect at high salience (95th percentile)</i>					
Salience (total effect)	-0.013	0.015	-0.043	0.017	0.382

Table 4.6: Quadratic contribution of salience

Panel B: Quadratic Contribution of Salience ($\partial^2 Y/\partial \text{Salience}^2$)					
Lobbying level	Estimate	SE	CI Low	CI High	p-value
Low (-1 SD)	≈ 0				
Mean (0)	0 (by construction)				
High (+1 SD)	≈ 0				

4.5.2 Electoral Timing

As an additional test of the salience mechanism, I examine whether the use of secondary policymaking instruments varies with electoral timing. This is because time to election is often used as a proxy of salience of the political world to voters (Gross and Chiru, 2022). I estimate an auxiliary model that includes indicators for election years and post-election years as alternative proxies for elevated public attention. To include the split government control variable, lobbying is left out of the estimation.

Table 4.7 presents the results. The coefficient on the election-year indicator is positive and statistically significant at the 1% level, indicating that divergence *increases* during election years rather than decreases, as H1b predicts. The post-election-year indicator is negative and of similar magnitude, suggesting that this increase in divergence is reversed following the electoral period.

The results for the control variables differ somewhat from the baseline specification. Both the election-year and post-election-year coefficients are negative in alternative specifications, although the latter is consistently smaller in absolute terms, indicating a comparable temporal pattern. Notably, the coefficient on split government is negative in this model. This is the only specification in which such a relationship appears, and it is somewhat unexpected given the main results. One plausible explanation is the inclusion of year fixed effects, which may absorb variation previously attributed to institutional factors and thereby alter the estimated relationship. Further, the logic of Cox and McCubbins (1986) applies more directly to divergence than to relative bill size. This finding suggests that divergence may be a more appropriate proxy for disjointedness.

Rather than declining during periods of heightened voter attention, divergence rises systematically in election years and subsequently falls back. Three explanations could explain

Table 4.7: Electoral Timing Results

(a) Divergence

<i>Dependent variable: Divergence vs Title</i>	
Election Year	0.004*** (0.0005)
Post-Election Year	-0.004*** (0.0004)
Split Government	0.045*** (0.001)
Year	0.0001*** (0.00000)
Constant	0.699*** (0.001)
Country Fixed Effects	Yes
Sample	All Countries
Observations	948,305
R ²	0.096
Adjusted R ²	0.096
Residual Std. Error	0.147 (df = 948299)
F Statistic	20,061.260***

(b) Relative Section Size

<i>Dependent variable: Relative Section Size</i>	
Election Year	-0.021*** (0.001)
Post-Election Year	-0.006*** (0.001)
Split Government	-0.109*** (0.001)
Year	0.0003*** (0.00000)
Constant	-0.156*** (0.003)
Country Fixed Effects	Yes
Sample	All Countries
Observations	948,329
R ²	0.301
Adjusted R ²	0.301
Residual Std. Error	0.320 (df = 948323)
F Statistic	81,565.440***

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

this pattern. First, election years are associated with the passage of large omnibus packages, “Christmas tree”, bills rushed through before electoral recesses, which mechanically increase average section-level divergence and hiddenness independently of strategic intent. Second, lobby groups may increase contribution intensity sharply in election years to secure legislative commitments before a potential government change, partially or fully offsetting the deterrent effect of heightened salience. Third, salient election-year reporting may concentrate on horse-race coverage rather than legislative scrutiny, so the effective risk faced by legislators drafting bills may not increase as much as aggregate salience measures suggest. Disentangling these channels lies beyond the scope of the present analysis.

4.5.3 Legislation-Level Analysis

I re-estimate the main models using legislation rather than individual sections as the unit of analysis. Aggregating to the bill level provides a robustness check by assessing whether the main empirical patterns hold at a higher level, and it also allows for a more direct test of whether salience constrains secondary policymaking in the context of overall legislative prominence rather than at the level of specific policy content.

Dependent Variable: Model:	Divergence vs. Title			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Variables</i>				
Title salience	-0.0054 (0.0359)	-0.0077 (0.0556)	-0.0040 (0.0293)	0.0224 (0.0423)
Lobbying	0.1773*** (0.0436)		0.1782*** (0.0417)	0.1780*** (0.0413)
Title salience ²		-0.0025 (0.0075)		-0.0088 (0.0100)
Split government		0.3041*** (0.0361)		
Salience × Lobbying			0.0061 (0.0291)	0.0040 (0.0296)
<i>Fixed-effects</i>				
country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>				
Observations	23,721	237,449	23,721	23,721
R ²	0.05590	0.08445	0.05595	0.05644
Within R ²	0.05590	0.07235	0.05595	0.05644

Clustered (section_topic) standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

Table 4.5.3 presents the baseline fixed effects results at the legislation level. The lobbying variable is positive and highly statistically significant across specifications, consistent with H2. The salience variables continue to exhibit weak and inconsistent effects, in line with the section-level results. This pattern is substantively informative: it suggests that lobbying’s influence on

the secondary composition of legislation operates at the level of entire bills as well as individual sections, while salience does not translate cleanly to aggregate bill-level measures.

Dependent Variable:	Relative Section Length (Inverted)			
Model:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Variables</i>				
Title salience	-0.0079 (0.0053)	-0.0094 (0.0105)	-0.0059* (0.0030)	0.0029 (0.0068)
Lobbying	0.0272*** (0.0073)		0.0285*** (0.0073)	0.0284*** (0.0073)
Title salience ²		-0.0003 (0.0021)		-0.0029* (0.0016)
Split government		0.0770 (0.0511)		
Salience × Lobbying			0.0085* (0.0040)	0.0078* (0.0042)
<i>Fixed-effects</i>				
country	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fit statistics</i>				
Observations	23,721	237,450	23,721	23,721
R ²	0.02047	0.25208	0.02167	0.02244
Within R ²	0.02047	0.00674	0.02167	0.02244

Clustered (section_topic) standard-errors in parentheses

*Signif. Codes: ***: 0.01, **: 0.05, *: 0.1*

For relative section length at the legislation level (Table 4.5.3), lobbying is again positively associated and statistically significant across specifications, extending H2 to this outcome and unit of analysis. The interaction between salience and lobbying is positive and weakly significant at conventional levels (10%), which represents a reversal of sign relative to the section-level results. This sign change may reflect the different nature of salience as a construct at the bill level, where high-salience bills attract comprehensive scrutiny across all their provisions, potentially creating complementary rather than substitutive incentives.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The estimates support the theoretical framework in parts and qualify it in others. Three findings stand out. First, lobbying is systematically and positively associated with textual divergence; its relationship with relative section length is weaker and more sensitive to specification. Second, the unconditional effect of salience is modest and unstable, but the conditional relationship between salience and lobbying, which constitutes the central theoretical claim of the thesis, finds consistent empirical support in the marginal-effects analysis. Third, divided government is by a wide margin the most robust correlate of secondary policymaking, consistent with canonical models of legislative bargaining and distributive politics (Baron and Ferejohn, 1989). It is a good sign both for future research and validity that the new measurement is able to pick this up.

In what follows I evaluate each channel in turn, salience, lobbying, and institutional bargaining, before turning to the interaction that defines the main theoretical contribution.

5.1 Drivers of Secondary Policymaking

Secondary policymaking is not directly observed. I proxy for it with two textual measures, relative section length and divergence, that capture distinct features of legislative disjointedness and are only weakly correlated in the sample. I therefore report effects on each outcome separately before considering them jointly. All covariates are standardized, so reported coefficients can be read as the effect of a one-standard-deviation change in the regressor.

5.1.1 Salience

Among the three explanatory variables, salience provides the least consistent support for the theoretical priors. In the baseline and error-correction models, salience is positively associated with divergence in some specifications, consistent with the argument that moderate public attention raises the political cost of visible policymaking and thereby encourages obfuscation. A quadratic specification returns a pattern broadly consistent with the predicted inverted-U: divergence rises at low-to-moderate levels of salience and declines at higher levels. That pattern, however, is not robust to the inclusion of institutional controls. Once divided government enters the specification, the salience coefficients are no longer statistically distinguishable from zero.

The direct effect of salience is therefore fragile, and institutional structure appears to absorb much of the variation it would otherwise explain.

Two auxiliary tests recover evidence consistent with the salience mechanism despite this fragility. First, election years are associated with a statistically significant increase in divergence ($\beta = 0.004$), and post-election years with a symmetric decrease ($\beta = -0.004$), even conditional on divided government. Electoral timing is an imperfect proxy for salience but a standard one in the literature (Kernell, 2009). If one treats election years as shifts from low to moderate public attention, the positive effect on divergence is consistent with the upward-sloping segment of the theorized relationship; if one treats them as shifts to very high attention, the theory would predict a decline. That divergence rises rather than falls during election years suggests that elections more plausibly concentrate attention in the moderate range rather than at its extremes.

Second, when salience is measured at the level of the bill title rather than at the level of the legislative section, it exerts no consistent effect. The relative section length models tell a similar story: salience produces at most weak and inconsistent evidence of a negative association, again pointing to a mechanism that is locally rather than globally active.

5.1.2 Lobbying

Lobbying, by contrast, displays a more consistent and theoretically aligned pattern. In the baseline specifications, lobbying is positively and significantly associated with divergence ($\beta = 0.0124$).

The relative section length results are less supportive. Lobbying bears no robust, statistically significant relationship to hiddenness. This null is theoretically uncomfortable, since the framework predicts that organized interests should push provisions into less visible locations within the legislative text. Two interpretations seem plausible. The first is measurement: Relative section length may capture a dimension of concealment that lobbying does not systematically target, even if other dimensions (timing, vehicle selection, statutory delegation) are affected. Conceptually, in bills with over 1000 pages, a section that is a bit longer is not necessarily much more likely to be detected. This could indicate the relative section length is not the most right measurement to capture obfuscation. Further, some accounts on legislative obfuscation argue that legislative length, density, and verbosity add to informational opacity (Grimmer and Stewart, 2013). In that case, hiddenness could work in the opposite direction. The second is substantive: heavily lobbied provisions may be more elaborate and more expansive, which mechanically increases their textual footprint and offsets any tendency toward concealment at the section level. Highly lobbied provisions attract many different interest groups who all want specific concentrated gains (Cigler et al., 2020).

Aggregating to the bill level sharpens the picture. At that level, higher lobbying is associated with greater average hiddenness within bills. The implication is that lobbying shapes the overall architecture of legislation more reliably than it shapes the size of any individual provision.

These findings warrant a data caveat. Lobbying measures are considerably less comprehensive than the other covariates; systematic coverage exists for the United States and, in attenuated form, the European Union, and consistent time-series variation is effectively confined to the U.S. case. Several specifications therefore cannot include institutional controls such as divided government because the relevant variation is absent from the subsample. Because institutional factors explain a large share of the variance elsewhere in the analysis, this constraint should temper the substantive interpretation of the lobbying estimates.

5.1.3 Bargaining

The most consistent result in the analysis is the large and precisely estimated positive association between divided government and both outcomes. In nearly every specification, divided government is the largest coefficient in the model and the one estimated with the greatest precision. Further, the control for majority size shows that divergence and relative section length go down with more seats. This indicates that more parliamentary leverage decreases the need for disjointed legislation. Fragmentation, on this evidence, is a central driver of secondary policymaking. The election year model on relative section length is a notable exception to this pattern.

This pattern aligns closely with the canonical literature on legislative bargaining (Baron and Ferejohn, 1989; Cox and McCubbins, 1986). When governing authority is split, coalition-building is more costly, and policymakers have stronger incentives to layer, bundle, or embed provisions within broader legislative vehicles rather than pursue them through direct, standalone enactments. The consistency of the result also functions as a validity check on the text-based measures: divergence and section length respond to the institutional configurations that the bargaining literature would predict should raise the returns to legislative complexity.

Two caveats are in order. First, the magnitude of the divided-government coefficient is not directly comparable to those on salience and lobbying, which are continuous and standardized; the indicator variable will tend to produce a larger raw effect size without necessarily implying greater substantive importance. Second, the prominence of the institutional channel does not displace the theoretical claims advanced here. Institutional bargaining and organized interest influence are not mutually exclusive mechanisms. The interaction results developed below suggest that they operate jointly, and that the observable features of legislation reflect their combined pressure rather than the dominance of either.

5.2 Interaction

The central theoretical claim of the thesis is that salience and lobbying shape policy jointly, not independently. Several baseline specifications include a multiplicative interaction between the two, but interaction coefficients are rarely informative on their own (Brambor et al., 2006). I therefore recover the marginal effect of each regressor conditional on the level of the other. These quantities provide the most direct test of the conditional logic that motivates the framework.

The theoretical argument implies an asymmetry that a linear summary obscures. When an issue is highly salient, legislators incur larger political and reputational costs for producing policy that is hidden from or divergent from constituent preferences; those costs should attenuate the returns to lobbying. When lobbying is limited, by contrast, salience should leave a cleaner imprint on the policy the legislature produces.

The estimates support this logic on the lobbying margin. At low and moderate levels of salience, lobbying is positively and significantly associated with both divergence and hiddenness. As salience rises, the estimated effect attenuates; at high salience, the effect is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Public scrutiny blunts the capacity of organized interests to shape policy through less visible channels. This is the clearest piece of empirical support the data provide for the theoretical framework.

The symmetric exercise returns a more similar picture. Consistent with the baseline results, salience is weakly but positively associated with divergence and hiddenness at low values of lobbying, but loses value at high levels of lobbying.

In regions of the covariate space in which salience and lobbying are both high correspond to contested, high-stakes policy domains in which obfuscation is especially risky: the scrutiny that would ordinarily discipline policymakers is concentrated on a policy with well-resourced stakeholders on multiple sides. Under those conditions, the reputational costs of hidden maneuvering may exceed the rents it generates, producing more transparent policymaking.

Several interpretations are consistent with this pattern. The most straightforward reading is that heavy lobbying partially insulates legislators from the costs of visibility, so that the marginal penalty for relying on secondary instruments shrinks as the expected payoff to doing so grows (Culpepper, 2010). The data reveal no sharp threshold at which this insulation becomes operative: the attenuation is gradual and already detectable across the move from low to moderate lobbying, indicating that the offsetting force is continuous rather than regime-like. A second, non-exclusive possibility is that in domains where lobbying expenditures are large, organized interests and policymakers have already coordinated on a policy path that is only weakly responsive to short-run variation in public attention.

Taken together, the marginal-effects estimates constitute the strongest empirical support in this thesis for a conditional theory of policymaking under public attention. Salience and lobbying each exert independent influence when the other is modest, but each attenuates the influence of the other as it becomes dominant. The residual ambiguity, such as the mechanism underlying the flat or negative effect of salience at the highest levels of lobbying, does not undermine the basic pattern, but it marks out a clear agenda for further theoretical refinement.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In 2000, lobbyists quietly inserted a provision into the Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act that curtailed regulators’ authority over derivatives trading (Appelbaum, 2019). That clause is now widely counted among the ingredients of the excessive risk-taking that preceded the global financial crisis (Appelbaum, 2019). Four years later, Section 704 of the American Jobs Creation Act quietly truncated the bidding process for a government grant in a way that handed a competitive edge to the International Speedway Corporation. This has later been traced directly to the firm’s lobbying activity (Ferrey, 2012). Episodes like these make clear that secondary policymaking is anything but marginal. And yet, for all of this recognized importance, the literature offers no systematic account of when and why policymakers reach for these tools. This thesis takes a first step toward filling that gap. It develops and then empirically evaluates a theory of strategic secondary policymaking built around the interaction between voter attention (measured through salience) and interest group influence (proxied by lobbying expenditures). In this context, the argument is that both the provision in the Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act and the procurement grant for the International Speedway Corporation relied on relatively low to moderate levels of public attention to financial regulation and infrastructure policy in the early 2000s. These conditions reduced the political costs of accommodating organized interests, thereby enabling lobbying efforts to more effectively persuade policymakers to adopt provisions that were later widely criticized.

While the measures used are admittedly imperfect, but they offer a tractable foundation for studying a consequential and understudied feature of the legislative process. Further, the measurements give a way of quantifying legislative disjointedness, allowing it to be used for other field as well.

6.1 Findings

To operationalize secondary policymaking, I introduce two novel measures: textual divergence and relative section length. Each captures a distinct dimension of disjointedness. The two are only weakly correlated, evidence that they pick up different underlying phenomena. Neither measure can directly observe intent, a limitation shared throughout the study of political behavior, but together they provide a systematic window onto variation in the structure and

visibility of legislative provisions. Descriptively, the measures expose striking cross-national and temporal variation. The United States posts the highest divergence scores, while France and the European Union sit lower and steadier, punctuated by occasional spikes in the European Parliament. The 1989 French legal reform coincides with a marked decline in divergence, hinting that institutional changes, especially those that introduce external review of legislative coherence, can rein in disjointed lawmaking. Relative section length tells a different story: it stays low and stable in France while remaining persistently high in the United States and the European Union. The contrast between the two measures reinforces their conceptual distinctiveness. The empirical analysis shows that lobbying expenditures are positively associated with divergence and, in some specifications, with section length, suggesting that organized interests shape legislative structure independently of institutional context. Further, it points to legislative fragmentation as a key driver of secondary policymaking. Split government emerges as the most consistent and substantively important predictor across specifications, in line with theories of legislative bargaining and distributive politics. The role of salience is more layered. Its direct effects are inconsistent across models, but the marginal effects analysis provides strong evidence that salience conditions the influence of lobbying: as public attention rises, the effect of lobbying attenuates, consistent with the idea that visibility raises the political cost of obfuscation.

6.2 Prescription

The findings have several implications. The first concerns measurement. Both relative section length and semantic divergence are theoretically grounded, each captures a distinct facet of how secondary content is embedded in legislative text, but their empirical performance is not symmetric. Semantic divergence emerges as the more reliable workhorse. Its face validity with respect to external institutional events is consistently stronger: the 1989 establishment of the *Commission supérieure de codification* in France maps onto a sharp and sustained decline in divergence, and the high-attention period surrounding the September 11 attacks coincides with a marked reduction in U.S. divergence. This is in line with the theoretical prediction that visibility deters obfuscation. Divergence also tracks several established findings in the legislative politics literature more closely than relative section length, including the expected positive association with lobbying expenditure, the conditioning role of split government, and the predicted attenuation of obfuscation under heightened salience. Relative section length, by contrast, displays weaker external validity and noisier statistical behaviour. This could be since it is more sensitive to idiosyncratic drafting conventions. The implication is not that section length should be abandoned, it remains the more direct operationalisation of structural compression and continues to provide useful corroborating evidence where the two measures move together, but that divergence is the cleaner outcome variable for empirical work going forward, and that future studies of disjointed legislation should privilege textual over purely structural metrics.

A second implication concerns the constraining role of public attention. The interaction effect documented in the marginal effects analysis, whereby the influence of lobbying on both measures attenuates as salience rises-, echoes recent work on the constraining power of “sunlight” on policy outcomes (Nicolaidis et al., 2023). This literature argues that transparency, even in the absence of formal accountability mechanisms, raises the political cost of decisions that are unpopular with broader publics and thereby narrows the strategic space available to organised interests. The evidence here suggests that the same logic operates within rather than across bills: lobbying influence is not uniformly translated into legislative text, but is filtered by the visibility of the policy domain in which a given provision is embedded. The constraining effect of salience is gradual rather than absolute. Even at relatively high attention levels a non-trivial residual association between lobbying and divergence persists, indicating that sunlight raises the costs of obfuscation without eliminating them. Only at high levels of attention does voter influence go up.

A third implication is that the relationship between salience and organised influence is more nuanced than the standard treatment of attention as an exogenous parameter would suggest. Rather than treating attention as a fixed feature of the policy environment, the findings align with the view that political actors can strategically shape the salience environment in which their preferred provisions are considered. This also offers an opportunity for campaigners for the common good. As Culpepper and Lee (2026) emphasize, issue entrepreneurs can raise the salience of policy debates, especially after a crisis. This level of public attention can then force legislators to respond. Salience, in this reading, is not only a constraint on lobbying but also a lever within a broader political strategy.

6.3 Contribution

This thesis contributes to several strands of the political economy and legislative studies literatures. Within legislative studies, it introduces a novel textual approach to analysing complex lawmaking. Existing work on omnibus legislation and logrolling has largely relied on procedural indicators, such as amendment trajectories and roll-call voting patterns (McGann, 2019). By contrast, the measures developed here, textual divergence and section length, identify disjointed legislation directly from the structure and content of legal texts. This shifts attention from observable legislative procedures to the internal composition of statutes themselves, enabling the detection of secondary policymaking without reliance on roll-call data or expert coding. In doing so, the approach expands the empirical toolkit available for studying legislative complexity across diverse institutional settings. Beyond its analytical contribution, the framework also has practical implications. The automated detection of divergent or embedded provisions offers a new avenue for enhancing legislative transparency. Machine learning pipelines could be deployed to flag potentially disjointed amendments in near real time. At scale, with a larger corpus and fully automated ingestion, such systems could support not only academic research but also the work of journalists and policymakers seeking more effective oversight of legislative activity. It can add to increasing the power of voters over policies by decreasing the cost of

obtaining information. This increases voter influence by providing them with more information (Baron, 1994).

The findings further engage with theories of blame avoidance (Weaver, 1986; Immergut and Anderson, 2007), which posit that policymakers adopt strategies to diffuse or obscure responsibility for unpopular decisions. The moderating role of issue salience indicates that these strategies are not uniformly effective: heightened public attention appears to constrain opportunities for obfuscation, thereby qualifying the generality of blame avoidance as an explanatory framework. Institutional reforms that introduce coherence review, such as the changes observed in France, are associated with reductions in textual divergence. These findings connect to broader debates within the veto player tradition by demonstrating that institutional configurations shape not only policy outcomes but also the form and visibility of policymaking itself (Poole and Rosenthal, 1985). By integrating textual analysis with established theoretical frameworks, this thesis provides a foundation for future research on the structure, visibility, and political economy of lawmaking. Finally, the analysis carries clear policy implications (Adam et al., 2019). Contemporary debates, including those surrounding the “abundance” agenda (Klein and Thompson, 2025) and the European Commission’s competitiveness report (Draghi, 2024), underscore how fragmented and internally inconsistent legislation can undermine policy effectiveness. Yet not enough attention has been paid to the political reasons for such fragmented legislation. Identifying the institutional and political drivers of such fragmentation is therefore of direct practical relevance.

6.4 Limitations

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The first concerns measurement. Textual divergence and hiddenness capture observable features of legislative text, not the intent behind them. A TF-IDF-based divergence score reflects textual heterogeneity, which may stem from strategic disjointing but may equally reflect technical complexity or the sheer substantive breadth of a bill. Some legislation may therefore register as highly divergent without being deliberately obfuscatory, a construct validity issue familiar to any study of strategic political behavior. Future work might pair text-based measures with expert coding to better separate intentional disjointing from incidental complexity. Additionally, matching lobbying-bill matching through LD-2 disclosure data on specific bills will give more granular information on the legislative process. This gives a microfoundation on the level of the legislator, another way to tease out legislative intent

A second limitation concerns scope. The empirical analysis focuses on a limited set of democracies all with different systems. Extending the analysis across a broader institutional range would provide a sterner test of the institutional theory.

A third limitation is inferential. The empirical strategy is observational. The regression models show that salience, lobbying, and institutional fragmentation are associated with higher levels of disjointed legislation, but cross-sectional fixed effects cannot establish that policymakers actively respond to these conditions by disjointing legislation. Unobserved factors could

plausibly drive both the covariates and the outcomes. Future research could strengthen causal claims by exploiting quasi-experimental variation, natural experiments, or institutional reforms that isolate the mechanisms more cleanly. Recent work by Ash et al. (2025) goes in the right direction.

6.5 Future Research

Several promising lines of inquiry follow from this project. First, future work could tie textual measures of disjointed legislation more directly to legislative behavior. One natural approach would pair semantic divergence scores with individual voting records, where available, to test whether high-divergence bills produce more cross-cutting or ideologically heterogeneous coalitions. If disjointing works by bundling unrelated provisions, such bills should yield less ideologically coherent voting patterns, a behavioral validation of the mechanisms proposed here. Second, the framework invites dynamic corpus expansion. The dataset used in this thesis offers substantial cross-national and temporal coverage, but recent advances in automated text collection open the door to near-real-time analysis. Parliamentary text APIs and large-scale language models, ParlSpeech, ParlBERT, and emerging legislative extensions of the Comparative Manifesto Project, could enable continuous monitoring of divergence and hiddenness across legislatures, allowing researchers to study how disjointing responds to contemporary shocks, crises, and reforms. This would also allow cross country comparisons and closer institutional analysis.

Third, an overview of public statements made by policy makers to cross-reference with the bill stated observations would be an additional way to detect whether or not obfuscation is deliberate or merely a byproduct of negotiation.

Lastly, a qualitative process-tracing study of a series of case studies would allow for a stronger causal story. Since the measure employed here cannot pick up intent, a study of legislative changes in the process of drafting would be informative to illuminate the causal roll and the mechanisms of influence of interest groups.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This thesis has argued that the “Frankenstein” character of modern legislation, the stitching together of heterogeneous and often unrelated provisions, is not merely a byproduct of complexity but can be a strategic response to political incentives. Policymakers operate under competing pressures: the need to assemble coalitions, the pull of organized interests, and the discipline of public attention. Disjointed legislation is a tool for navigating these tensions.

What looks like incoherence in legislation may in fact be a structured and adaptive response to institutional and political constraints.

When legislators face audiences with asymmetric attention, voters who scan the headline, organized interests who read the fine print, the most efficient instrument may not be a coherent statute but a layered one. The bill becomes the venue in which incompatible demands

are reconciled, not by resolving them, but by sorting them into compartments of differential visibility.

The implications extend beyond the academic study of legislation. If a non-trivial share of policymaking takes place in the shadow of headline provisions, then conventional measures of democratic responsiveness, which typically read off government performance from a small number of salient issues, risk systematically understating the gap between what voters appear to want and what laws actually do (Gilens, 2012b; Bartels, 2008). Aggregate responsiveness on visible issues can coexist with persistent unresponsiveness on the embedded ones, and the architecture that produces this divergence may itself be invisible to citizens. A theory of representation that takes the structure of legislation seriously must therefore reckon not only with what legislators decide, but with how they choose to make their decisions legible.

The agenda this opens is both empirical and normative. Empirically, the textual measures developed here render the internal architecture of legislation legible at scale, raising the possibility of monitoring secondary policymaking in something approaching real time. Normatively, the findings invite reflection on what kinds of transparency meaningfully constrain organized influence. Disclosure regimes that publish bills are not equivalent to disclosure regimes that surface the substantive content of their sections. If, as the evidence here suggests, public attention disciplines topical drift more effectively than it disciplines structural compression, then the design of accountability institutions should aim less at the volume of legislative information disclosed than at its interpretability.

Disjointed legislation is in some measure a creature of necessity: democracies governed by coalitions, deadlines, and competing constituencies will rarely produce statutes of perfect thematic unity. But the same architecture that makes such legislation possible also makes it useful for purposes that voters might not endorse if they could see them whole. Whether the stitching is benign accommodation or strategic obfuscation depends on what is being joined, and on whether the public is in a position to notice. The contribution of this thesis is to insist that the question is worth asking, and to offer the tools with which to begin answering it.

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A Appendix Overview

This appendix provides supplementary material supporting the empirical analysis. `app:keywords` outlines the classification scheme, `app:twommeasuresexamines` the relationship between the main variables, and

B Keywords Used for Classification

This section lists the keyword dictionary used to classify policy topics.

Category	Keywords
Taxation	tax, vat, income tax, corporate tax
Healthcare	health, hospital, medical, insurance
Education	school, education, university, student
Environment	environment, pollution, emission, climate
Criminal	crime, criminal, penalty, offence
Immigration	immigr, visa, asylum, refugee
Labor	labor, labour, employment, wage, union
Housing	housing, rent, tenant, mortgage
Energy	energy, electricity, oil, gas
Defense	defense, military, armed forces
Finance	budget, fiscal, revenue, debt
Technology	technology, digital, software, ai
Social	welfare, benefit, inequality
Justice	court, justice, judicial

Table 1: Keyword map by policy category

C Relationship Between the Two Measures

This section examines the empirical relationship between textual divergence and section length.

Table 2: Relationship between divergence and section length

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>
	section length
Divergence vs Title	0.100*** (0.001)
Constant	0.849*** (0.001)
Observations	700,458
R ²	0.038
Adjusted R ²	0.038
Residual Std. Error	0.080 (df = 700,456)
F Statistic	27,317.020*** (df = 1; 700,456)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

D Illustrative Sample: Ten Laws

This section presents illustrative legislative sections and their associated divergence and section length scores.

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
2001/235/EC: Council Decision of 8 March 2001 on the principles, priorities, intermediate and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey (71 sentences)		
Avis juridique important—32001D02352001/235/EC: Council Decision of 8 March 2001 on the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership with the Republic of Turkey Official Journal L 085, 24/03/2001 P. 0013–0023.	0.22	0.97
Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 390/2001, the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions contained in the Accession Partnership for Turkey are set out in the Annex hereto, which forms an integral part of this Decision.	0.39	0.99
Regulation (EC) No 390/2001 provides that the Council is to decide, by a qualified majority and following a proposal from the Commission, on the principles, priorities, intermediate objectives and conditions contained in the individual Accession Partnership.	0.47	0.99

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence section length	
OJ L 58, 28.2.2001, p. 1. ANNEX TURKEY: 2000 ACCESSION PARTNERSHIP 1.	0.61	0.51
The EC-Turkey Association Council decided that the implementation of the Accession Partnership for Turkey will be monitored by the Association Agreement bodies as appropriate.	0.68	0.99
In order to prepare for membership, Turkey should prepare a national programme for the adoption of the acquis. This programme should set out a timetable for achieving the priorities and intermediate objectives established in the Accession Partnership.	0.68	0.97
Article 4 of the proposed single-framework Regulation. 7. MONITORING: The implementation of the Accession Partnership will be monitored in the framework of the Association Agreement.	0.68	0.93
The Helsinki European Council stated: "Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States."	0.83	0.96
Article 2: The implementation of the Accession Partnership shall be monitored in the Association Agreement bodies as appropriate and through the competent Council bodies to which the Commission shall report regularly.	0.83	0.99
Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights. Address in that context the situation of those persons in prison sentenced for expressing non-violent opinions. Strengthen legal and constitutional guarantees of the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.	0.84	0.70
Article 3: This Decision shall take effect on the third day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Communities. Done at Brussels, 8 March 2001.	0.87	0.96
Enhanced political dialogue and political criteria: Strongly support the UN Secretary General's efforts to bring to a successful conclusion the process of finding a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.	0.92	0.99
Community assistance is conditional on the fulfilment of essential elements, and in particular on progress towards fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.	0.95	0.97
Article 2 thereof, Having regard to the proposal from the Commission, Whereas:	0.98	0.99

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
The Commission's 2000 regular report presented an objective analysis on Turkey's preparations for membership and identified a number of priority areas for further work.	0.99	0.99
90/69/EEC: Council Decision of 18 December 1989 concerning the conclusion of the Protocol of Bolivia to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (9 sentences)		
Avis juridique important—31990D0069: Council Decision of 18 December 1989. Official Journal L 045, 21/02/1990 P. 0024.	0.42	0.56
Article 1: The Protocol for the accession of Bolivia to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade is hereby approved on behalf of the European Economic Community. The text of the Protocol is attached to this Decision.	0.42	0.78
Article 113 thereof, Whereas Bolivia entered into negotiations with the European Economic Community and the other Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade with a view to its accession to that Agreement.	0.64	0.89
Article 2: The President of the Council is hereby authorized to designate the person empowered to sign the Protocol in order to bind the Community. Done at Brussels, 18 December 1989.	0.82	0.56
A bill to amend titles 23 and 49, United States Code, to streamline the environmental review for highway projects, and for other purposes (14 sentences)		
For a highway project shall not affect the eligibility of the State or the highway project to receive Federal funds. Preservation of Parklands: Section 138 of title 23, United States Code, is repealed.	0.76	0.93
Document combination: To further expedite the environmental review process for a project under this section, the Secretary may combine the final environmental impact statement and the record of decision for the project if a preferred alternative is identified in the environmental impact statement.	0.78	0.93
Categorical exclusions: A highway project carried out within the right-of-way of a Federal-aid highway or a highway funded under section 118(e) shall be considered to be a categorical exclusion under section 771.117(a) of title 23, Code of Federal Regulations.	0.81	0.79
In addition to amounts available as of the date of enactment of this Act, the United States needs to expend \$20,000,000,000 to maintain the transportation infrastructure of the United States.	0.90	0.93

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
Because revenues deposited in the Highway Trust Fund are declining, transportation project costs need to be reduced and regulatory requirements for those projects should be streamlined.	0.90	0.71
A State may use for any highway project one or more proprietary, patented, or experimental products selected by the State without competitive bidding or approval by the Secretary.	0.90	0.93
Regardless of whether the alternative would impact the environment to a greater degree than the preferred alternative. Limitations on Claims: Section 139(1) of title 23, United States Code, is amended.	0.91	0.93
The United States needs at least \$255,000,000,000 per year in transportation spending during the 50-year period after the date of enactment of this Act to maintain the transportation system in a state of good repair and to complete necessary upgrades.	0.92	0.93
Up to \$80,000,000,000 per year in additional spending could be used for projects that would provide positive economic returns.	0.93	0.93
The lead agency shall be responsible for determining the purpose of and need for a project, and inviting and designating participating agencies.	0.94	0.93
By striking “provide an opportunity for involvement by participating agencies and the public in defining” and inserting “provide for an opportunity for public comment on the definition of”.	0.95	0.93
The individual or entity bringing the claim shall bear the burden of proving the claim. Exclusions; Document Combination: Section 139 of title 23, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following.	0.95	0.93
Transportation spending as of the date of enactment of this Act falls 60 percent short of the amount required.	0.99	0.93
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.	1.00	0.50
Campaign Information Improvement Act (19 sentences)		
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.	0.70	0.63
Every broadcast station license issued under this Act shall be subject to the free broadcast time obligations imposed by section 315(c). Free-Time Obligations: Section 315 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C.)	0.98	0.95

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
With respect to a primary or primary runoff election, is determined for the interval beginning 60 days before such election and ending on the date of that election; and with respect to a general or special election, is determined for the interval beginning 90 days before such election.	0.99	0.79
Nothing in this subsection, and no use of free broadcast time allotted under this subsection, shall be construed to restrict or otherwise affect the purchase of advertising time under subsection (b) of this section. Free Cable Time: Section 611 of the Communications Act of 1934.	0.99	0.95
By striking “forty-five” and inserting “30”; by striking “sixty” and inserting “45”; and by striking “lowest unit charge of the station for the same class and amount of time for the same period” and inserting “lowest charge of the station for the same amount of time for the same time of day and day of week”.	1.00	0.95
By redesignating subsections (c) and (d) as subsections (d) and (e), respectively.	1.00	0.95
A licensee shall not preempt the use, during any period specified in subsection (b), of a broadcasting station by a legally qualified candidate for public office who has purchased and paid for such use pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b).	1.00	0.95
Each license for a broadcasting station shall annually make available free broadcast time for policy debates in accordance with the requirements of this subsection. The Commission shall not renew the license of any licensee who substantially fails or refuses to comply with the requirements of this subsection.	1.00	0.84
A licensee subject to this subsection shall allot free broadcast time for policy debates. Such licensee shall allot not less than 30 minutes of free broadcast time during each even-numbered year to the candidates for the House of Representatives of each qualified political party for any congressional district that falls within the grade B contour of such station’s signal.	1.00	0.84
A political party shall be treated as a qualified political party if the candidate for President of such party in the most recent presidential election received more than 5 percent of the total number of votes cast.	1.00	0.95

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence section length	
A licensee allots free broadcast time as required by this subsection by broadcasting the joint appearance by each of the candidates at a forum for the discussion of political issues.	1.00	0.95
A cable operator shall annually make available free cable time for policy debates in accordance with the requirements of regulations prescribed by the Commission. Such regulations shall, to the extent practicable, require each such cable operator to provide such free cable time in the same amounts and manner as free broadcast time is required to be provided by broadcast station licensees.	1.00	0.84
Consumer Pay Telephone Protection Act of 1998 (39 sentences)		
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.	0.43	0.85
Not later than one year after the date of enactment of the Consumer Pay Telephone Protection Act of 1998, the Commission shall prescribe the regulations required under this subsection. The regulations shall provide for the monitoring of the compliance of payphone service providers with the provisions of this subsection.	0.79	0.92
By inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection (c): Change at Pay Telephones.	0.83	0.97
Of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 276(b)).	0.97	0.97
Shall use such amounts to promote or otherwise support the installation, maintenance, and use of public interest pay telephones, including specially designed payphones for the disabled and the provision of payphone service in remote locations, nursing homes, emergency homeless shelters, hospitals, and schools.	0.98	0.90
Of that subsection. Federal Communications Commission Action: Notwithstanding any provision of the Communications Act of 1934.	0.98	0.97
A decision of the Federal Communications Commission to deregulate the provision of payphone service was premature and did not address adequately the need for local competition that would benefit users of pay telephones.	0.99	0.97
The decision of the Commission does not promote the widespread deployment of affordable payphone service that would benefit the general public, nor does the decision promote the widespread deployment of public interest telephones.	0.99	0.97

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence section length	
Public interest telephones should be maintained in each State and should be provided to promote the public safety, health, and welfare. Purpose: The purpose of this Act is to require payphone service providers to provide cash change to pay telephone users who deposit amounts in excess of the amounts charged.	0.99	0.97
Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Federal Communications Commission shall submit to Congress a report on the availability of technologies or systems that permit persons who do not have exact change to utilize pay telephones for local telephone calls without being overcharged.	0.99	0.97
The Federal Trade Commission shall carry out a study of competition in the market for intrastate payphone service, including whether or not locational monopolies in such service exist, and whether or not rates for local pay telephone calls are market-based.	0.99	0.97
Some payphone service providers have increased the charge for the use of a coin-operated pay telephone for a local call to 35 cents but have not put into place a system for providing change to users of such telephones.	1.00	0.97
Payphone service providers should charge pay telephone users only for the actual time of use of pay telephones.	1.00	0.97
Most consumers, if given a choice, would prefer that any amount of excess deposits not refunded be used for pay telephones for public health, safety, and welfare purposes rather than accrue to the financial benefit of payphone service providers.	1.00	0.97
There are approximately 2,000,000 pay telephones in the United States, and payphone service providers accrue substantial revenue at the expense of Americans who do not have the exact amount of the charge for their use.	1.00	0.97
The use of coin-operated pay telephones represents an increasing commercial activity that substantially affects interstate commerce.	1.00	0.97

Decision of the EEA Joint Committee No 50/1999 of 30 April 1999 amending Annex II (technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) to the EEA Agreement (9 sentences)

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
Decision of the EEA Joint Committee No 50/1999 of 30 April 1999 amending Annex II (technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) to the EEA Agreement, Official Journal L 284, 09/11/2000 P. 0008.	0.44	0.78
Annex II to the Agreement was amended by Decision No 31/1999 of the EEA Joint Committee of 26 March 1999.	0.52	0.89
Of the Agreement have been made to the EEA Joint Committee.	0.69	0.89
Article 4: This Decision shall be published in the EEA section of, and in the EEA Supplement to, the Official Journal of the European Communities. Done at Brussels, 30 April 1999.	0.76	0.67
Article 3: This Decision shall enter into force on 1 May 1999, provided that all the notifications under the Agreement have been made.	0.89	0.89
Commission Directive 96/28/EC of 10 May 1996 adapting to technical progress Council Directive 76/116/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to fertilizers.	0.94	0.89
Article 1: The following indent shall be added in point 1 (Council Regulation 76/116/EEC) of Chapter XIV of Annex II to the Agreement: “396 L 0028: Commission Directive 96/28/EC of 10 May 1996 (OJ L 140, 13.6.1996, p. 30).”	0.95	0.78
Is to be incorporated into the Agreement, HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS.	0.96	0.89
Article 2: The texts of Directive 96/28/EC in the Icelandic and Norwegian languages, which are annexed to the respective language versions of this Decision, are authentic.	0.97	0.89
Mud Dump Permanent Closure and Remediation Act of 2000 (22 sentences)		
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.	0.46	0.68
After the date of enactment of this subsection, dumping shall be prohibited at the Historic Area Remediation Site (as defined in subsection (g)).	0.82	0.91
Remediation to be followed by permanent closure: Upon satisfying the goal specified in subsection (g).	0.83	0.95
The Administrator shall ensure that the materials used for remediation contain significantly lower levels of contaminants, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and polychlorinated biphenyls, than exist at the Historic Area Remediation Site.	0.83	0.91

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
At the Historic Area Remediation Site, as determined by the Administrator, the Secretary shall not issue any further permits authorizing the transportation of dredged materials to the site for any purpose.	0.86	0.91
The goal shall be to reduce the level of contamination at the Historic Area Remediation Site to a level that reflects background ambient contamination levels in the ocean.	0.87	0.91
Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Administrator, in consultation with the Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, shall develop and publish in the Federal Register standards for evaluating dredged materials to be used solely for remediation purposes at the Historic Area Remediation Site.	0.89	0.91
After the date of issuance of standards for remediation materials, the Secretary may issue permits authorizing the transportation of dredged materials to the Historic Area Remediation Site solely for the purpose of providing for remediation of the site.	0.90	0.91
The Secretary shall provide written notice of the permit to the Governors of the States of New York and New Jersey and to each Member of Congress representing one of such States.	0.90	0.73
Definitions: The term ‘background ambient contamination levels’ means a level of contamination that is substantially equivalent to or less than the levels of contamination in biota and sediments found occurring naturally in the ocean in areas that have never been impacted by ocean dumping.	0.93	0.86
The Administrator shall provide notice and an opportunity for public comment before issuing final standards.	0.99	0.95
Existing permits: A permit issued under this section before the date of enactment of this subsection shall not be effective to the extent that the permit authorizes dumping in violation of this subsection.	1.00	0.91
At least 30 days before issuing a permit, the Secretary shall provide advance notice of permits.	1.00	0.95
Requirements for standards: In general, in developing standards the Administrator shall ensure certain conditions are met.	1.00	0.95

To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a credit against income tax for the

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence section length	
of a principal residence by a first-time homebuyer (16 sentences)		
First-time homebuyer: The term ‘first-time homebuyer’ means any individual who (and if married, such individual’s spouse) had no present ownership interest in a principal residence in the United States during the 3-year period ending on the date of the purchase.	0.43	0.81
SECTION 1. CREDIT FOR FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS.	0.62	0.75
Shall not apply. Denial of Double Benefit: No credit shall be allowed under subsection (a) if the credit under section 1400C is allowed.	0.67	0.94
Principal residence: The term ‘principal residence’ has the same meaning as when used in section 121.	0.75	0.88
Married individuals filing separately: In the case of a married individual filing a separate return, the credit under this section is allowable only if the individual is a first-time homebuyer, and subsection (a) shall be applied by substituting ‘\$3,250’ for ‘\$6,500’.	0.76	0.88
Limitation to one residence: The credit under this section shall be allowed with respect to only one residence of the taxpayer.	0.77	0.88
Subsection (d) of section 1400C of such Code is amended by inserting “and section 25B” after “other than this section”.	0.77	0.81
If two or more individuals who are not married purchase a principal residence, the amount of the credit allowed under subsection (a) shall be allocated among such individuals, except that the total amount of the credits allowed to all such individuals shall not exceed \$6,500.	0.80	0.94
Purchase and purchase price: The terms ‘purchase’ and ‘purchase price’ have the meanings provided by section 1400C(e). Carryforward of Unused Credit: If the credit allowable under subsection (a) for any taxable year exceeds the limitation imposed by section 26(a), such excess shall be carried to the succeeding taxable year.	0.82	0.94
In the case of a residence with respect to which a credit was allowed under section 25B, to the extent provided in section 25B(g).	0.83	0.94
Maximum credit: The credit allowed under subsection (a) shall not exceed \$6,500.	0.87	0.88

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
Married individuals filing jointly: In the case of a husband and wife who file a joint return, the credit under this section is allowable only if both spouses are first-time homebuyers.	0.88	0.94
Thereof to verify the eligibility of taxpayers for the credit allowable by this section, the exception provided by section 6045(e).	0.91	0.94
Subsection (a) of section 1016 of such Code (relating to general rule for adjustments to basis) is amended by striking “and” at the end of paragraph (26).	0.91	0.94
By striking the period at the end of paragraph (26) and inserting “, and”, and by adding at the end the following new paragraph.	0.95	0.94
Subsection (c) of section 23 of such Code is amended by striking “section 1400C” and inserting “sections 25B and 1400C”.	0.97	0.94
To amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act to authorize States to restrict receipt of foreign municipal solid waste and implement the Agreement Concerning the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste		
Agreement: The term ‘Agreement’ means the Agreement Concerning the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste between the United States and Canada, signed at Ottawa on October 28, 1986 (TIAS 11099) and amended on November 25, 1992.	0.55	0.93
Foreign municipal solid waste: The term ‘foreign municipal solid waste’ means municipal solid waste generated outside of the United States.	0.63	0.93
Municipal solid waste: Except as provided in subparagraph (B), the term ‘municipal solid waste’ means all waste materials discarded for disposal by households, including single and multifamily residences, and hotels and motels; and all waste materials discarded for disposal generated by commercial, institutional, municipal, and industrial sources.	0.68	0.69
In general: Beginning immediately after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator shall perform the functions of the Designated Authority of the United States described in the Agreement with respect to the importation and exportation of municipal solid waste.	0.73	0.93
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.	0.74	0.72

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence section length	
In general: Until the date on which all final regulations issued by the Administrator become effective, a State may enact laws or issue regulations imposing limitations on the receipt and disposal of foreign municipal solid waste within the State.	0.80	0.90
No person shall import, transport, or export municipal solid waste for final disposal or for incineration in violation of the Agreement.	0.83	0.97
Consent to importation: In considering whether to consent to the importation under article 3(c) of the Agreement, the Administrator shall give substantial weight to the views of the State into which the municipal solid waste is to be imported, and consider the impact of the importation on continued public support for recycling programs and landfill capacity.	0.84	0.93
Effect on interstate and foreign commerce: No State action taken as authorized by this section shall be considered to impose an undue burden on interstate and foreign commerce.	0.93	0.93
Any order issued pursuant to this subsection shall state with reasonable specificity the nature of the violation. Any penalty assessed in the order shall not exceed \$25,000 per day of noncompliance for each violation.	0.95	0.83
Whenever on the basis of any information the Administrator determines that any person has violated or is in violation of this section, the Administrator may issue an order assessing a civil penalty for any past or current violation.	0.96	0.93
Not later than 24 months after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator shall issue final regulations with respect to the Administrator's responsibilities.	0.97	0.97
Trade and treaty obligations: Nothing in this section affects, replaces, or amends prior law relating to the need for consistency with international trade obligations.	0.98	0.97
To prevent the use of certain bank instruments for unlawful Internet gambling, and for other		
Internet gambling is primarily funded through personal use of bank instruments, including credit cards and wire transfers.	0.53	0.97

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence	section length
Unlawful internet gambling: The term “unlawful Internet gambling” means to place, receive, or otherwise transmit a bet or wager by any means which involves the use, at least in part, of the Internet where such bet or wager is unlawful under any applicable Federal or State law.	0.72	0.97
Internet gambling is a major cause of debt collection problems for insured depository institutions and the consumer credit industry.	0.75	0.97
The National Gambling Impact Study Commission in 1999 recommended the passage of legislation to prohibit wire transfers to Internet gambling sites or the banks which represent them.	0.81	0.97
Factors to be considered: In considering any enforcement action under this subsection against any payment system, the Federal functional regulators and the Federal Trade Commission shall consider the extent to which such person is extending credit or transmitting funds knowing the transaction is in connection with unlawful Internet gambling.	0.82	0.76
Internet: The term “Internet” means the international computer network of interoperable packet switched data networks.	0.84	0.97
Internet gambling conducted through offshore jurisdictions has been identified by United States law enforcement officials as a significant money laundering vulnerability.	0.85	0.89
Restricted transaction: The term “restricted transaction” means any transaction or transmittal to any person engaged in the business of betting or wagering, in connection with unlawful Internet gambling, of credit extended to or on behalf of such other person, including through the use of a credit card.	0.87	0.97
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.	0.92	0.82
The establishment of policies and procedures that prevent the acceptance of the products or services of the payment system in connection with a restricted transaction.	0.92	0.97
Such person relies on and complies with the policies and procedures of a designated payment system to identify and block restricted transactions.	0.94	0.97
Money transmitting business and money transmitting service: These terms have the meanings given in section 5330(d) of title 31, United States Code.	0.94	0.79

Section (first 2 sentences)	Divergence section length	
Identify types of policies and procedures, including nonexclusive examples, which would be deemed to be “reasonably designed to identify” and “reasonably designed to block” restricted transactions.	0.96	0.97
The establishment of policies and procedures that allow the payment system to identify restricted transactions by means of codes in authorization messages, and block restricted transactions identified as a result.	0.97	0.97
Consider exempting restricted transactions from any requirement under subsection (a) if the Federal functional regulators find that it is not reasonably practical to identify and block such transactions.	0.97	0.97
Of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 for the purchase or sale of securities.	0.97	0.97
To the extent practical, permit any participant in a payment system to choose among alternative means of identifying and blocking restricted transactions.	0.98	0.97
Such policies and procedures of the designated payment system comply with the requirements of regulations prescribed under subsection (a).	0.98	0.97
Bets or wagers: The term “bets or wagers” means the staking or risking by any person of something of value upon the outcome of a contest, a sporting event, or a game subject to chance, upon an agreement that the person will receive something of greater value in the event of a certain outcome.	0.98	0.97
In general: This section shall be enforced by the Federal functional regulators and the Federal Trade Commission under applicable law.	0.99	0.97
Designated payment system defined: The term “designated payment system” means any system utilized by any creditor, credit card issuer, financial institution, or money transmitting business that the Federal functional regulators determine could be utilized in connection with any restricted transaction.	1.00	0.97
Federal functional regulator: The term “Federal functional regulator” has the same meaning as in section 509 of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act.	1.00	0.97

E Alternative Quantitative Measures

This section presents robustness checks using alternative divergence measures.

Table 4: Validity regressions (Outcome: TF-IDF cosine divergence, section vs. title)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	TF-IDF cosine divergence: section vs. title Cosine only	JSD only	Cosine + JSD
	(1)	(2)	(3)
TF-IDF cosine divergence: section vs. text	0.402*** (0.024)		0.381*** (0.070)
Jensen-Shannon divergence: section vs. text		0.476*** (0.030)	0.028 (0.088)
Constant	0.615*** (0.017)	0.531*** (0.023)	0.608*** (0.027)
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000
R ²	0.220	0.197	0.220
Adjusted R ²	0.219	0.196	0.218

Note:

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

F External Validation

This section provides qualitative validation of the divergence measure by examining the most and least divergent sections within selected laws.

Table 5: Most and least divergent sections by law

Law	Extreme	Section text	Divergence
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Least divergent	Amendments to the Social Security Act and title II of this Act.	0.898
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Least divergent	Amendments to the Public Health Service Act, the Social Security Act, and title V of this Act.	0.917
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Least divergent	Independent Medicare Advisory Board. Subtitle F—Health Care Quality Improvements.	0.943
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Least divergent	Graduate nurse education demonstration. Subtitle G—Improving Access to Health Care Services.	0.949
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Least divergent	Savings. Subtitle B—More Affordable Medicines for Children and Underserved Communities.	0.951
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Most divergent	Inflation adjustment of limitation on health flexible spending arrangements under cafeteria plans.	1.000
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Most divergent	Excise tax on indoor tanning services in lieu of elective cosmetic medical procedures.	1.000
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Most divergent	Exclusion for assistance provided to participants in State student loan repayment programs for certain health professionals.	1.000
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Most divergent	Repeal of physician payment update. Section 3101 is repealed.	1.000
Affordable Care Act (2010)	Most divergent	Revision to community health teams. Section 3502(c)(2)(A) is amended to include other primary care providers.	1.000
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Least divergent	Conforming amendments related to simplification of individual income tax rates.	0.903
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Least divergent	Repeal of alternative minimum tax.	0.931
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Least divergent	Treatment of deferred foreign income upon transition to participation exemption system of taxation.	0.946
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Least divergent	Restriction on insurance business exception to passive foreign investment company rules.	0.949
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Least divergent	Exception from private foundation excess business holding tax for independently operated philanthropic business holdings.	0.954
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Most divergent	Extension of American Samoa economic development credit.	1.000
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Most divergent	Clarification of unrelated business income tax treatment of entities exempt under section 501(a).	1.000
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Most divergent	Exclusion of research income limited to publicly available research.	1.000
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Most divergent	Private operating foundation requirements relating to operation of an art museum.	1.000
Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (2017)	Most divergent	501(c)(3) organizations permitted to make political campaign statements in the ordinary course of activities.	1.000

Table 6: Most and least semantically divergent sections by law (extended)

Law	Extreme	Section text	Divergence
Big Beautiful Bill	Least divergent	To provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Least divergent	Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Least divergent	SECTION 1. TABLE OF CONTENTS. The table of contents of this Act is as follows.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Least divergent	Availability of standard utility allowances based on receipt of energy assistance.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Most divergent	The claimant’s place of employment was in the affected area.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Most divergent	Disease Contraction in Affected Areas: For purposes of this section, the Attorney General may not determine that a claimant has satisfied the requirements under subsection (a) unless the claimant submits written evidence.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Most divergent	Written medical records or reports created by or at the direction of a licensed medical professional, created contemporaneously with the provision of medical care to the claimant, that the claimant contracted a specified disease.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Most divergent	Other documentation determined by the Attorney General to demonstrate that the claimant contracted a specified disease after a period of physical presence in an affected area.	1.000
Big Beautiful Bill	Most divergent	Section 8(a) of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (Public Law 101–426; 42 U.S.C. 2210 note) is amended by striking “2 years after the date of enactment of the RECA Extension Act of 2022” and inserting “December 31, 2024”.	1.000
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Least divergent	Profiling is subject to the rules of this Regulation governing the processing of personal data, such as the legal grounds for processing or data protection principles. The European Data Protection Board shall provide guidance on this matter.	0.850

Continued on next page

Law	Extreme	Section text	Divergence
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Least divergent	The Board should be assisted by a secretariat provided by the European Data Protection Supervisor. The staff of the European Data Protection Supervisor involved in carrying out the tasks conferred on the Board shall perform their tasks exclusively under the instructions of the Chair of the Board.	0.860
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Least divergent	The Board shall have a secretariat, which shall be provided by the European Data Protection Supervisor. The secretariat shall perform its tasks exclusively under the instructions of the Chair of the Board.	0.865
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Least divergent	Directive 95/46/EC is repealed with effect from 25 May 2018. References to the repealed Directive shall be construed as references to this Regulation.	0.870
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Least divergent	In order to promote the consistent application of this Regulation, the Board should be set up as an independent body of the Union. To fulfil its objectives, the Board should have legal personality.	0.895
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Most divergent	Existing data protection rules of churches and religious associations.	1.000
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Most divergent	The power to adopt delegated acts is conferred on the Commission subject to the conditions laid down in this Article. The delegation of power referred to in Article 12(8) may be revoked at any time by the European Parliament or by the Council.	1.000
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Most divergent	International agreements involving the transfer of personal data to third countries or international organisations which were concluded by Member States prior to 24 May 2016, and which comply with Union law as applicable prior to that date, shall remain in force until amended, replaced, or revoked.	1.000
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Most divergent	Review of other Union legal acts on data protection.	1.000

Continued on next page

Law	Extreme	Section text	Divergence
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Most divergent	The Commission shall, if appropriate, submit legislative proposals with a view to amending other Union legal acts on the protection of personal data, in order to ensure uniform and consistent protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data.	1.000

G Policy Subject Regressions

This section reports regressions examining how section length and divergence vary across policy domains.

Table 7: section length by Policy Subject

	section length		
	Section Only (1)	Title Only (2)	Section + Title (3)
Panel A: Section subject (ref. = Immigration)			
None	-0.407*** (0.006)		-0.379*** (0.006)
Agriculture	0.006		0.039***
Criminal Justice	-0.001		0.024***
Defense	0.001		0.030***
Education	-0.003		0.057***
Energy	0.006		0.011
Environment	0.007		0.024***
Finance	0.002		0.029***
Health	-0.007		0.026***
Housing	0.005		0.037***
Justice	0.007		0.036***
Labor	0.007		0.021***
Social Policy	0.005		0.026***
Taxation	0.004		0.021***
Technology	0.009		0.030***
Trade	0.012		0.019***
Transportation	0.007		0.029***
Panel B: Title subject (ref. = Immigration)			
None		-0.119*** (0.003)	-0.095*** (0.003)
Agriculture		-0.162***	-0.140***
Criminal Justice		-0.123***	-0.097***
Defense		-0.162***	-0.119***
Education		-0.184***	-0.160***
Energy		-0.027***	-0.026***
Environment		-0.118***	-0.066***
Finance		-0.132***	-0.092***
Health		-0.122***	-0.099***
Housing		-0.164***	-0.132***
Justice		-0.251***	-0.194***
Labor		-0.082***	-0.031***
Social Policy		-0.077***	-0.045***
Taxation		-0.051***	-0.051***
Technology		-0.060***	-0.060***
Trade		-0.022***	-0.022***
Transportation		-0.114***	-0.092***
Constant	0.941*** (0.006)	0.711*** (0.003)	1.000*** (0.006)
Observations	1,380,738	1,380,738	1,380,738
R^2	0.146	0.012	0.154

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Reference category: Immigration.

Table 8: Textual Difference by Policy Subject

	Textual Difference		
	Section Only	Title Only	Section + Title
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: Section subject (ref. = Immigration)			
None	0.078*** (0.001)		0.078*** (0.001)
Agriculture	-0.002**		-0.004***
Criminal Justice	-0.004***		-0.004***
Defense	0.001		0.001
Education	-0.008***		-0.010***
Energy	0.004***		0.003***
Environment	0.001		0.000
Finance	-0.006***		-0.006***
Health	-0.022***		-0.022***
Housing	-0.006***		-0.007***
Justice	-0.003***		-0.004***
Labor	-0.005***		-0.006***
Social Policy	-0.004***		-0.004***
Taxation	-0.010***		-0.010***
Technology	0.000		-0.002**
Trade	0.013***		0.012***
Transportation	-0.001		-0.002***
Panel B: Title subject (ref. = Immigration)			
None		0.003*** (0.0004)	-0.002*** (0.0004)
Agriculture		0.011***	0.007***
Criminal Justice		0.005***	-0.000
Defense		0.012***	0.004***
Education		0.009***	0.004***
Energy		0.002***	0.001***
Environment		0.016***	0.006***
Finance		0.008***	0.000
Health		0.005***	0.002***
Housing		0.010***	0.003***
Justice		0.016***	0.004***
Labor		0.014***	0.004***
Social Policy		0.006***	-0.001
Taxation		-0.005***	-0.005***
Technology		0.009***	0.009***
Trade		0.005***	0.004***
Transportation		0.006***	0.002***
Constant	0.912*** (0.001)	0.971*** (0.0004)	0.911*** (0.001)
Observations	1,380,735	1,380,735	1,380,735
R^2	0.355	0.009	0.361

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Reference category: Immigration.

H Country-Level Regressions

This section reports regressions comparing section length and divergence across countries.

Table 9: section length and Difference by Country

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	section length (1)	Textual Difference (2)
France	-0.615*** (0.001)	0.022*** (0.0001)
USA	-0.026*** (0.001)	-0.046*** (0.0001)
Constant	0.973*** (0.001)	0.978*** (0.0001)
Observations	1,380,738	1,380,735
R ²	0.538	0.352
Adjusted R ²	0.538	0.352

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01
Reference category: EU.