

Policy documents across 185 countries predominantly rely on evidence from the Global North

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Background (aka ‘Why do we care?’)

- Over the past decades, evidence-informed policymaking has gained widespread support in national and international policy circles (incorporating practices to better integrate **research**, **evaluation**, and **analysis** into decision-making).
- Yet, despite this normative shift, **we still know surprisingly little** about what types of evidence actually make it into policy—and **where that evidence originates**.
- Government agencies, IGOs, think tanks, and research institutions **all produce (relevant) knowledge**—but the distribution of their reach remains unclear.
- Understanding who informs policymaking matters: **information is central** to most major theories of the policy process.

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There is catch:

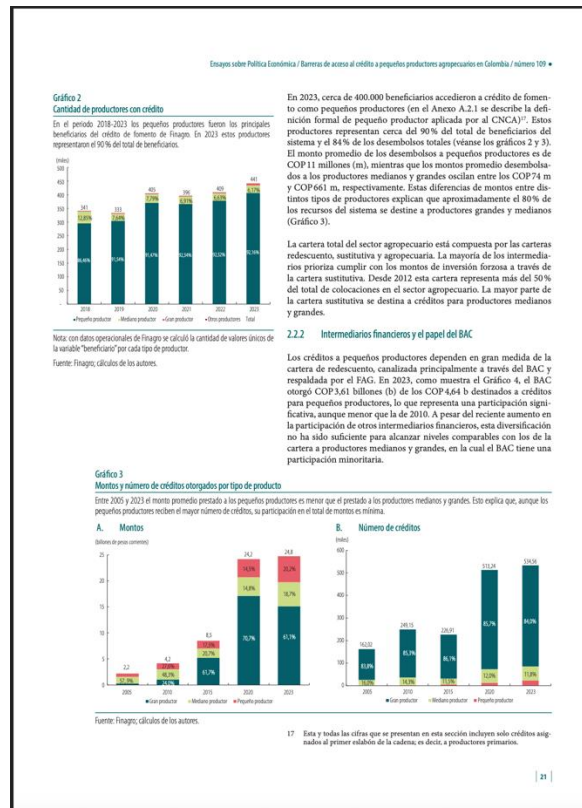
Access to, and **use** of, evidence are **not neutral**.

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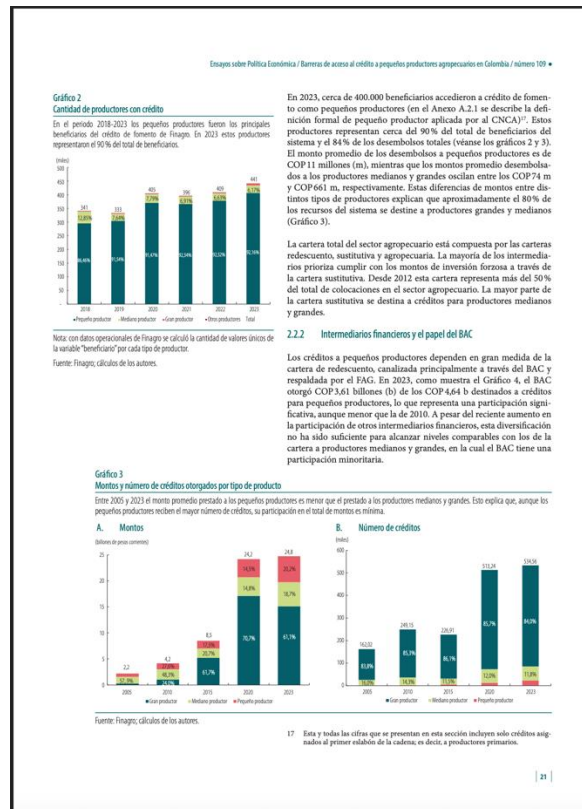
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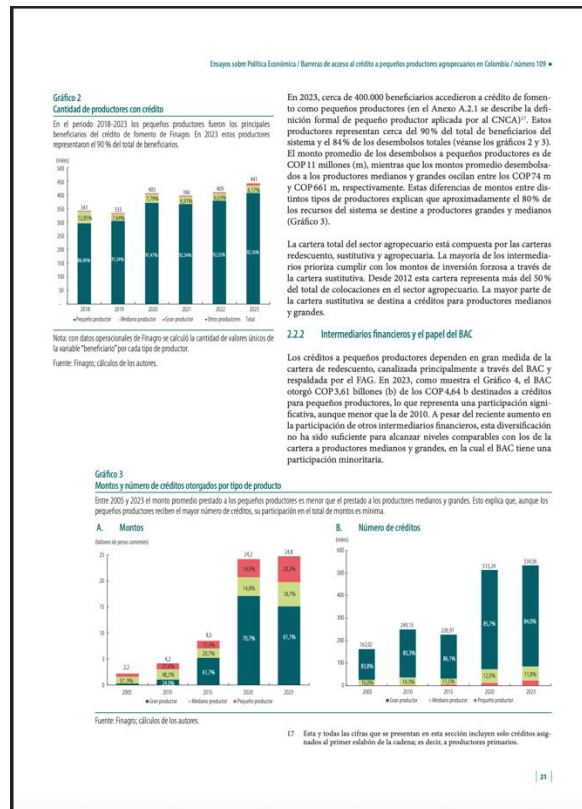
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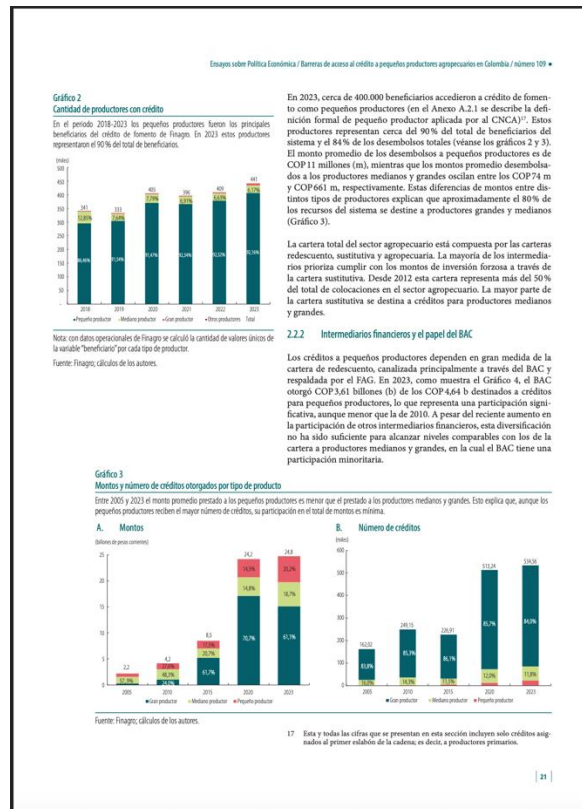
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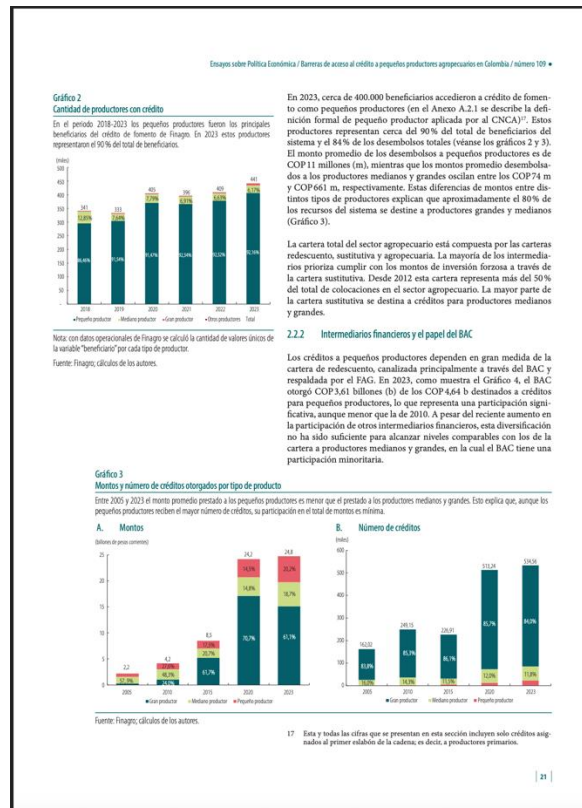
These aren't just administrative outputs. They **signal institutional priorities**, reflect **norms around credibility**, and show **what kinds of knowledge** get referenced.

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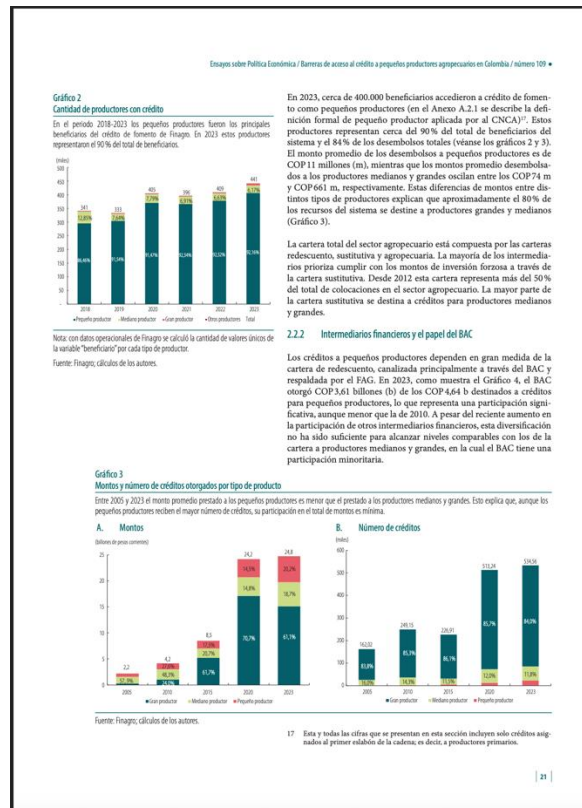
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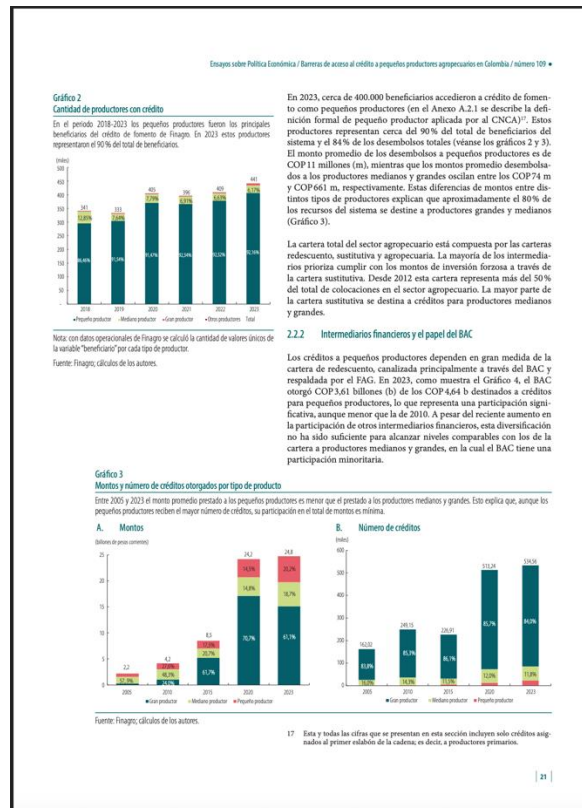
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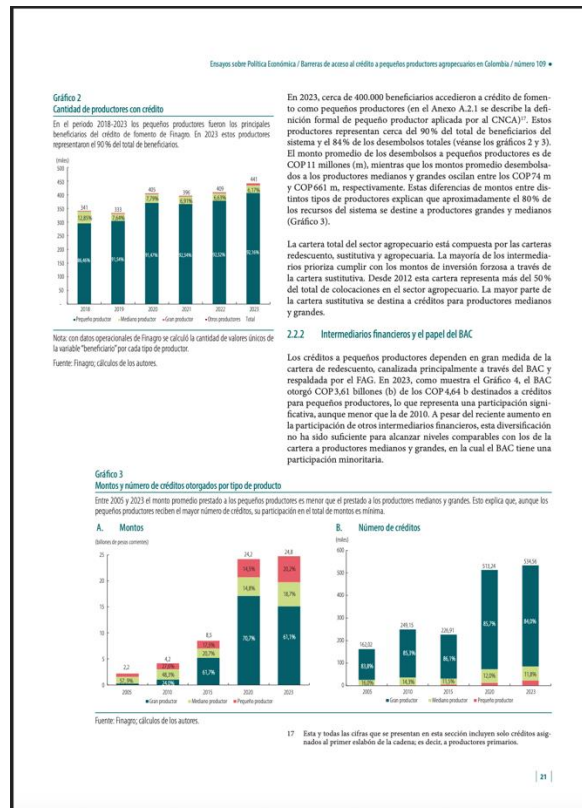
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A potentially valuable evidence point missing is a **global, cross-sectoral perspective**—a way to capture patterns of evidence use **at scale** across countries and policy domains.



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Policy documents (Core)

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policy documents from 185 countries

Data from Overton (Szomszor and Adie, 2022) focused on documents produced by **governments** between 2000 and 2024 citing either *policy* or *academic* references.

From Overton, we extract:

- Document IDs
- Country of origin
- Policy sources referenced
- Academic sources referenced
- Summaries of document content

We employ the summaries to classify documents into Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) policy domains using an LLM (Llama3.3 70B).

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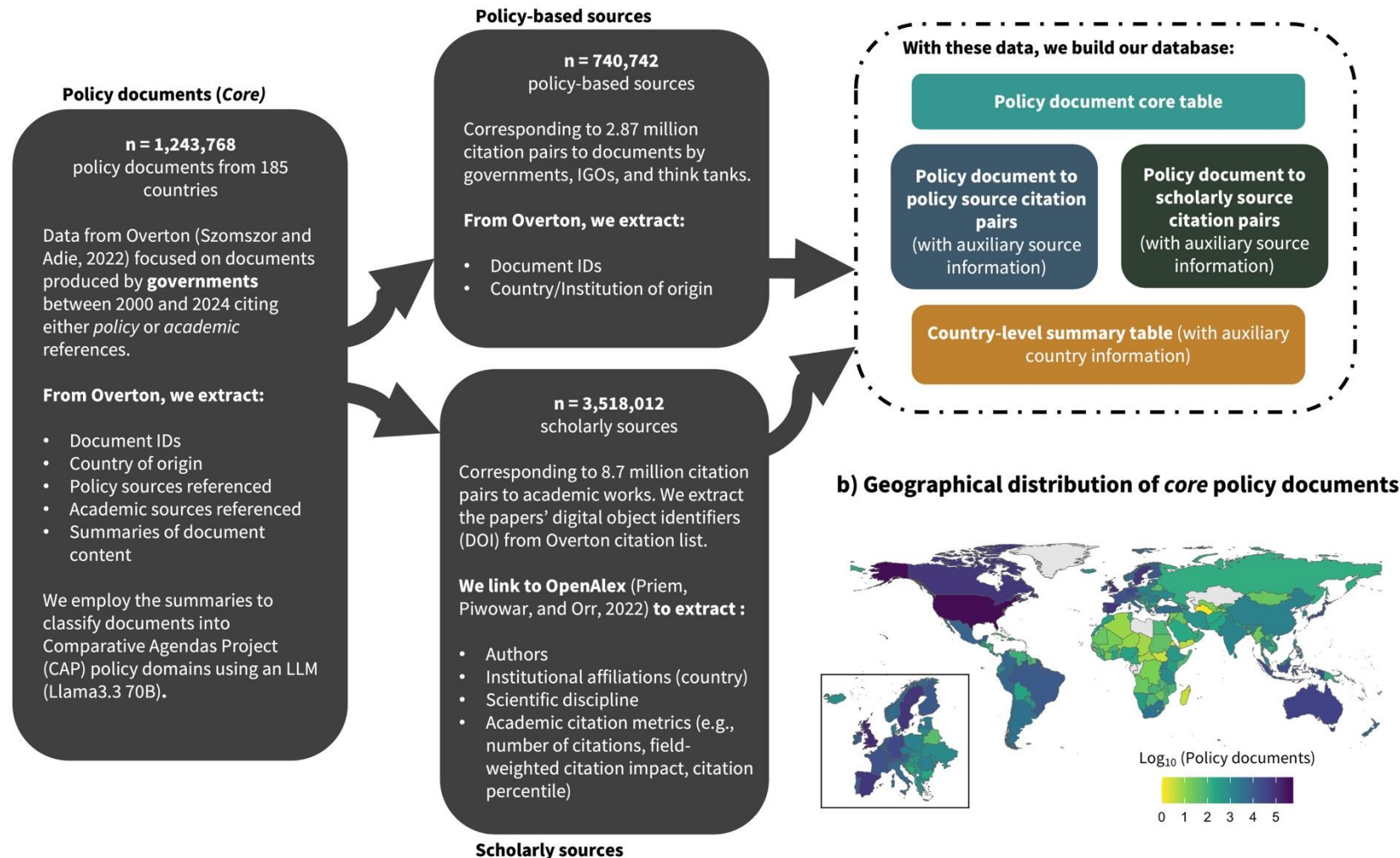
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- We collected data on **government-authored policy documents** (2000-2024) from Overton—the largest global database of policy documents.
- Gathered the sources they referenced, dividing them into:
 -  **Policy-based** (govs, IGOs, think tanks)
 -  **Scholarly** (journals, working papers)

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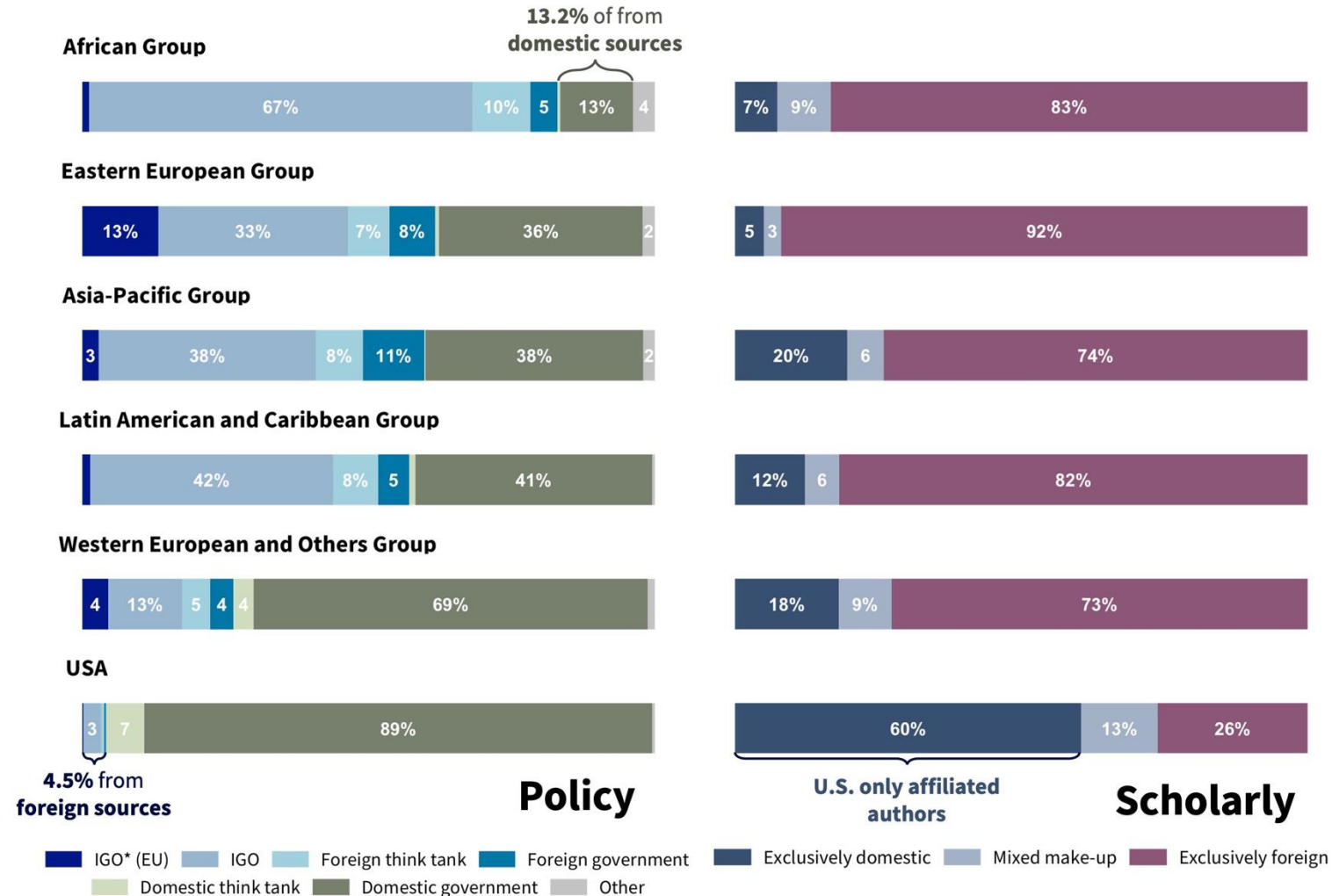


For ***scholarly*** citations, we identify institutional affiliation of authors and categorized them as:

- *Domestic*: All authors from the citing country
- *Mixed*: At least one domestic affiliation
- *Foreign*: No domestic affiliations

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- We calculate an *H-index* to quantify international reach and also apply network centrality metrics (e.g., betweenness, eigenvector, and PageRank)

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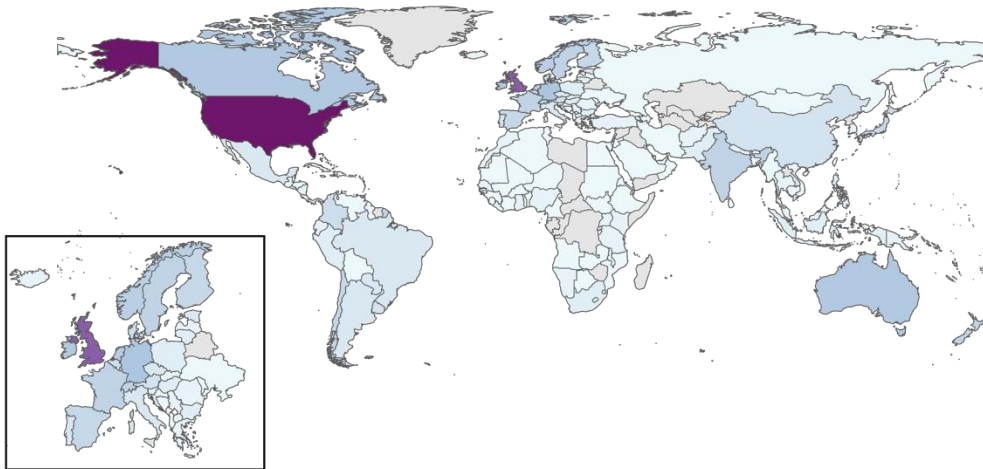
 For ***scholarly*** citations, we employ the **country affiliations of cited authors**:

- We compute the **share of total scholarly** references in the corpus that include at least one affiliated author from each country.

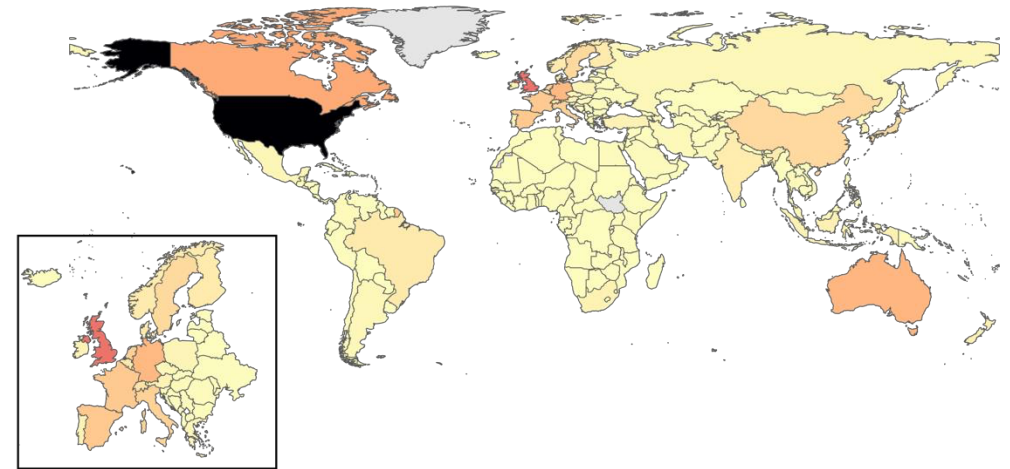
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a) Distribution of *H*-indexes government document references



b) Share of cited academic works with authors from country



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c) Countries with the highest *H*-indexes and share of academic affiliations

COUNTRY	H-I	N. REFS	GROUP
USA	44	10553	WEOG
UK	32	10508	WEOG
Germany	12	986	WEOG
Australia	11	1056	WEOG
Canada	11	1596	WEOG
Ireland	11	978	WEOG
Netherlands	10	663	WEOG
Norway	9	495	WEOG
France	8	706	WEOG
India	8	207	Asia-Pacific Group
New Zealand	8	533	WEOG
Sweden	8	967	WEOG
Switzerland	8	411	WEOG
Chile	7	171	GRULAC
Finland	7	502	WEOG
Japan	7	494	Asia-Pacific Group
Spain	7	628	WEOG
Belgium	6	412	WEOG
Colombia	6	283	GRULAC
Denmark	6	129	WEOG

Government-to-government references

COUNTRY	% DOCS	N. PAPERS	GROUP
USA	43.4%	1306064	WEOG
UK	13.3%	399890	WEOG
Canada	7.6%	227790	WEOG
Australia	6.6%	199213	WEOG
Germany	6.4%	191658	WEOG
Spain	4.9%	147406	WEOG
France	4.8%	143340	WEOG
Netherlands	4.2%	127181	WEOG
Italy	4%	120763	WEOG
China	3.3%	100288	Asia-Pacific Group
Sweden	3.3%	98589	WEOG
Japan	3.1%	94955	Asia-Pacific Group
Switzerland	2.4%	73578	WEOG
Belgium	1.9%	57785	WEOG
Denmark	1.8%	54042	WEOG
Brazil	1.8%	52669	GRULAC
Finland	1.7%	51935	WEOG
Norway	1.7%	50491	WEOG
India	1.6%	48793	Asia-Pacific Group
New Zealand	1.3%	39300	WEOG

Docs with author based at an institution in country

When we zoom-into policy and academic spaces :

- 17 of the top 20 countries are shared across policy-based and scholarly outputs (largely WEOG)

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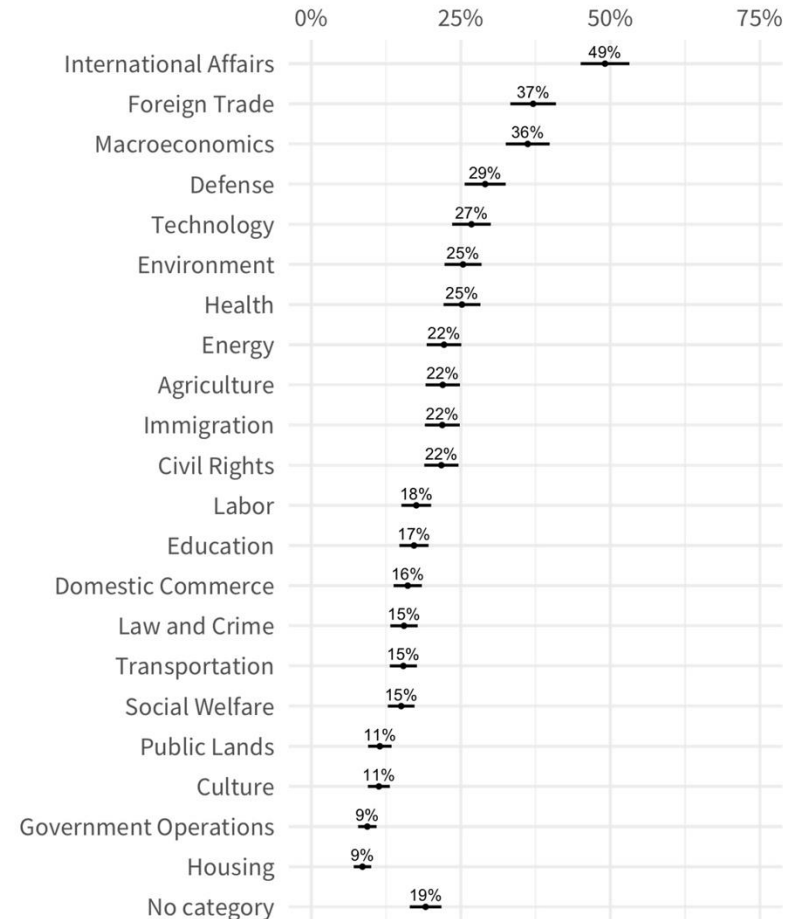
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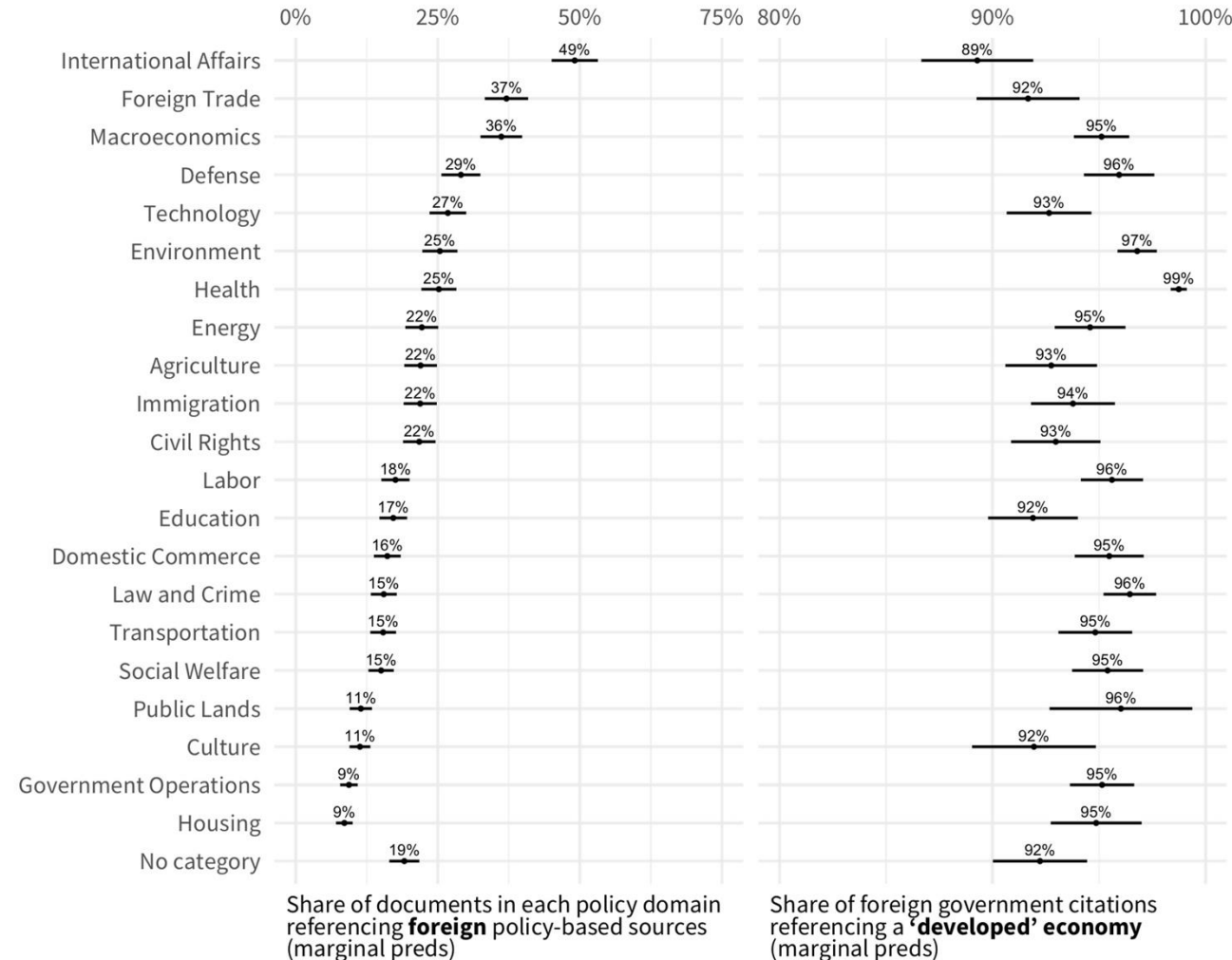


Share of documents in each policy domain
referencing **foreign** policy-based sources
(marginal preds)

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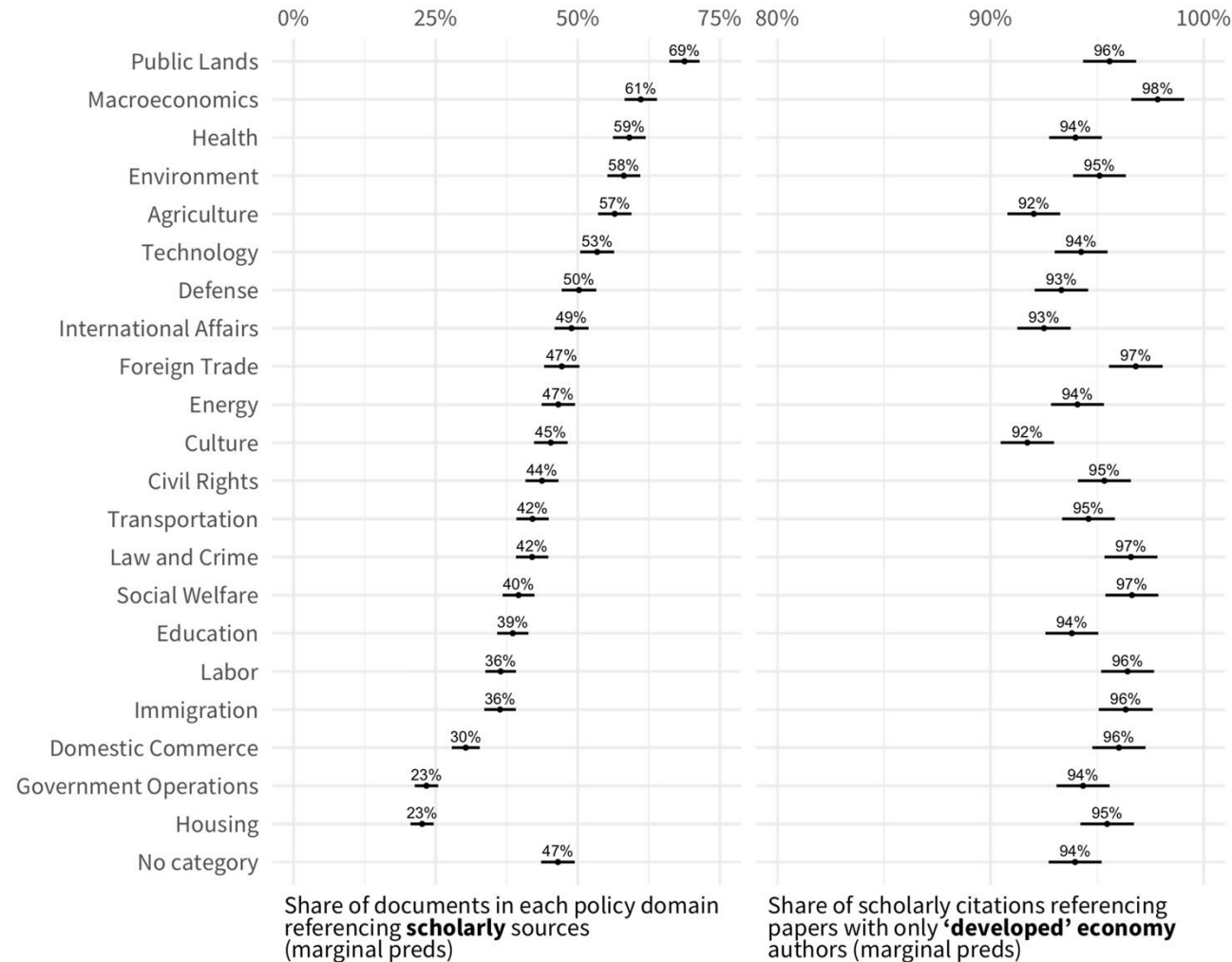
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much more...

Thank you!



*Take a look at the
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We would really
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feedback.



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Auxiliary information

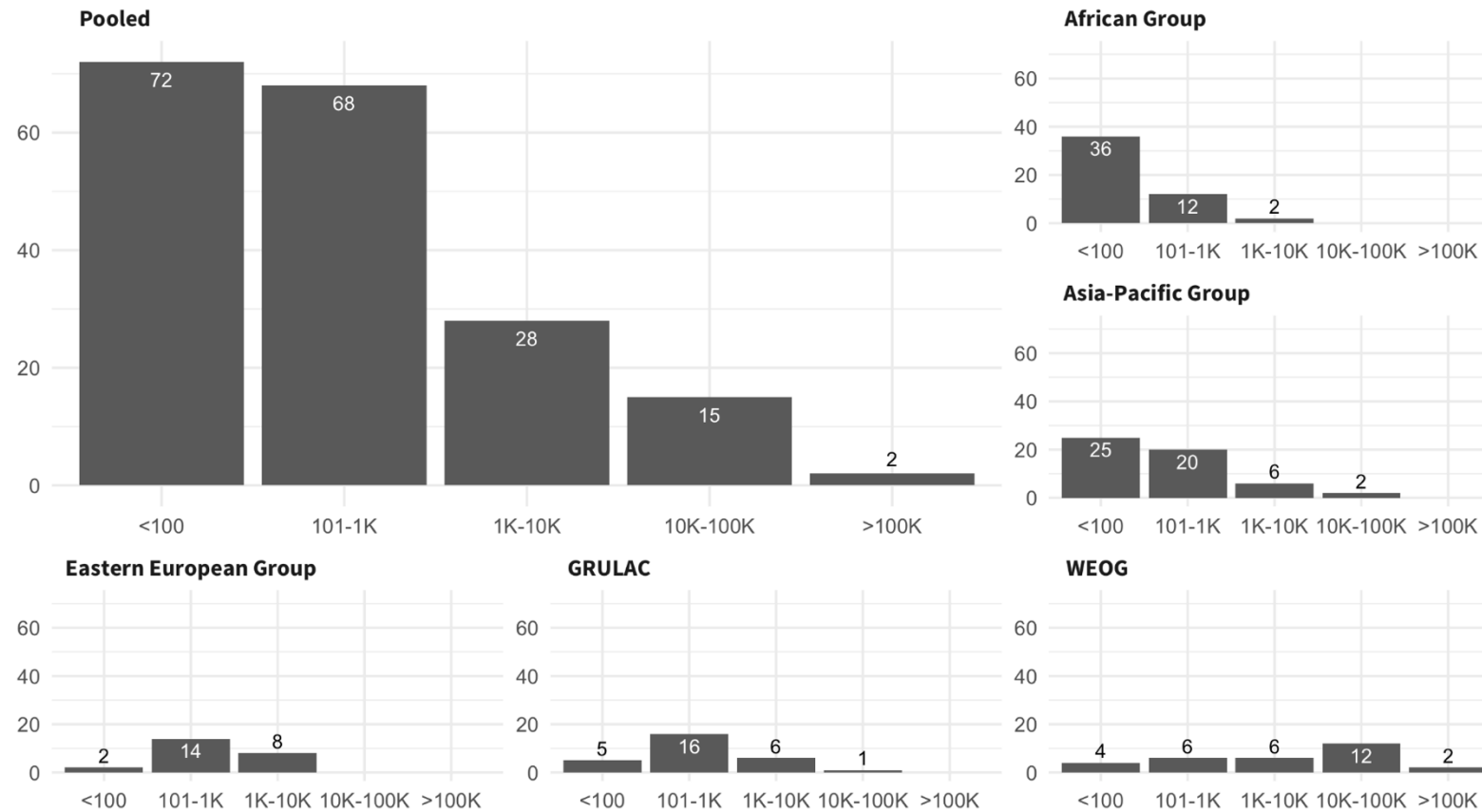


Figure A1: Overview of distribution of government authored policy documents. This figure shows the number of countries categorized by the total of policy documents collected, both in the full sample and grouped by UN Regional levels.

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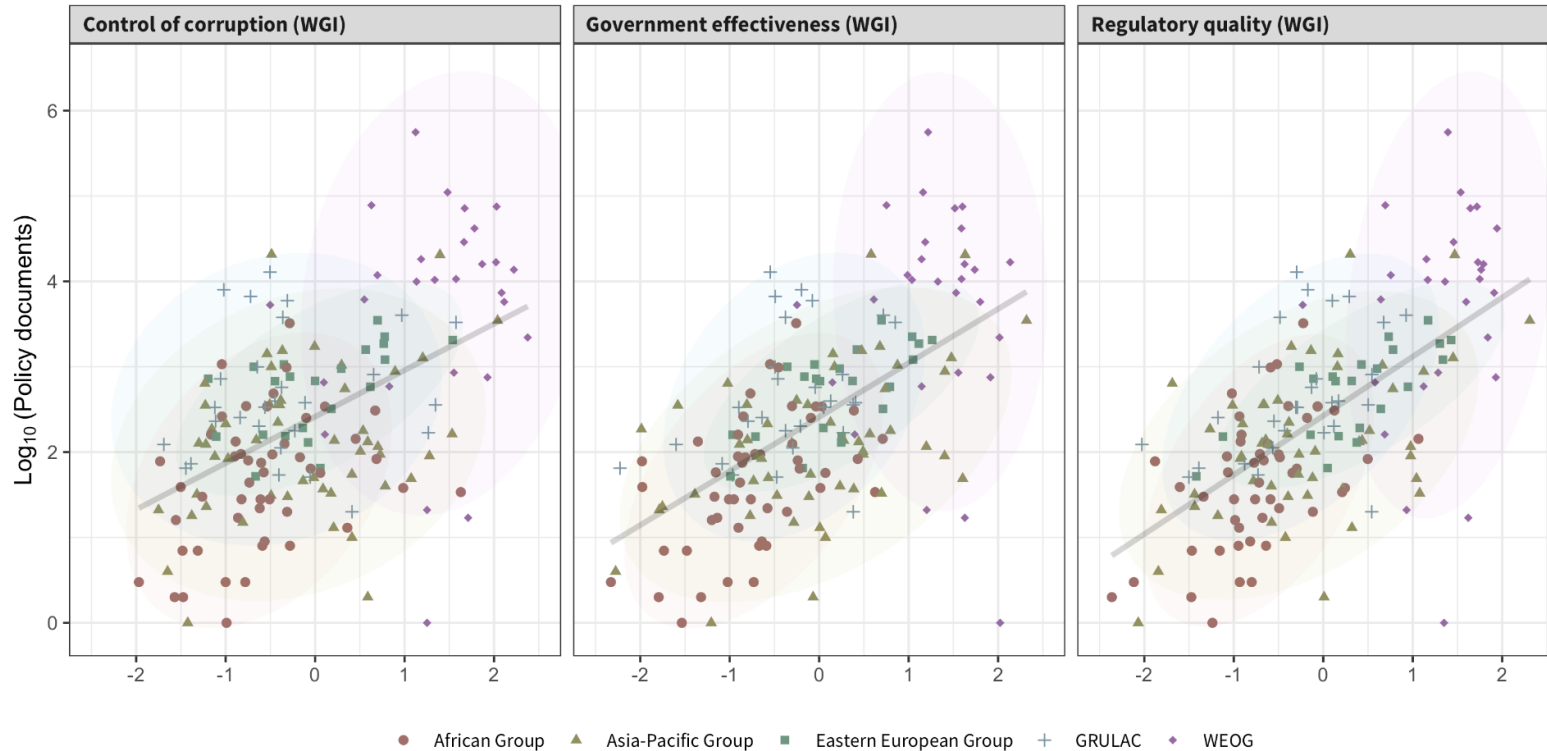


Figure A2: Relationship between Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) [1] and policy documents available across countries. Each dot represents individual countries, with ellipses at the UN Region-level.

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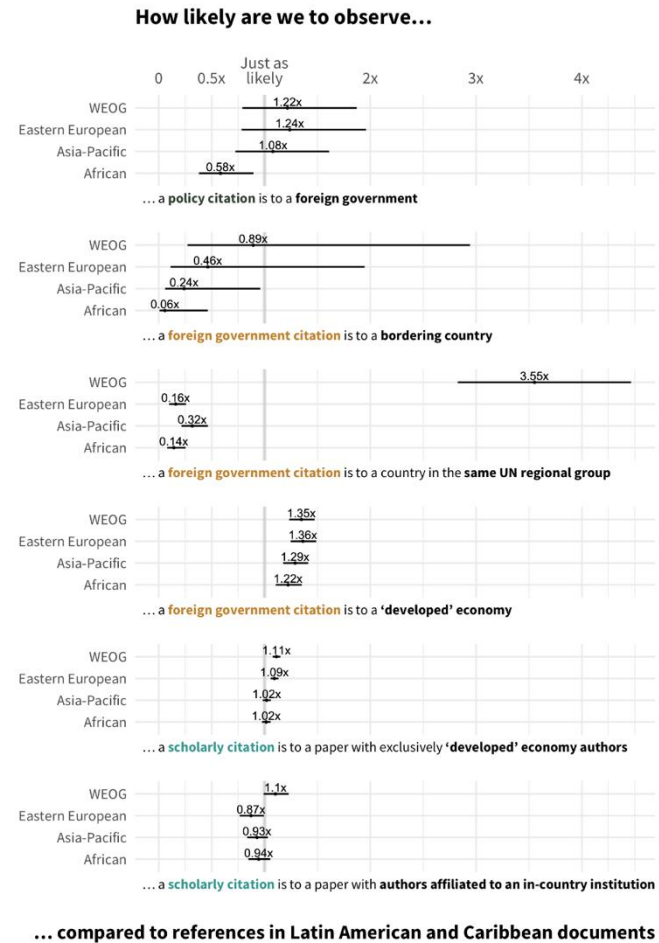


Figure A3: Marginal effects on observing a reference with a specified feature across groups. Results from six logistic mixed-effects models with document government author random effects. The estimates in the figure are relative risks representing the ratio of probability of observing a reference with the characteristic in a UN region group to the probability of observing it in documents authored by Latin American and Caribbean countries.

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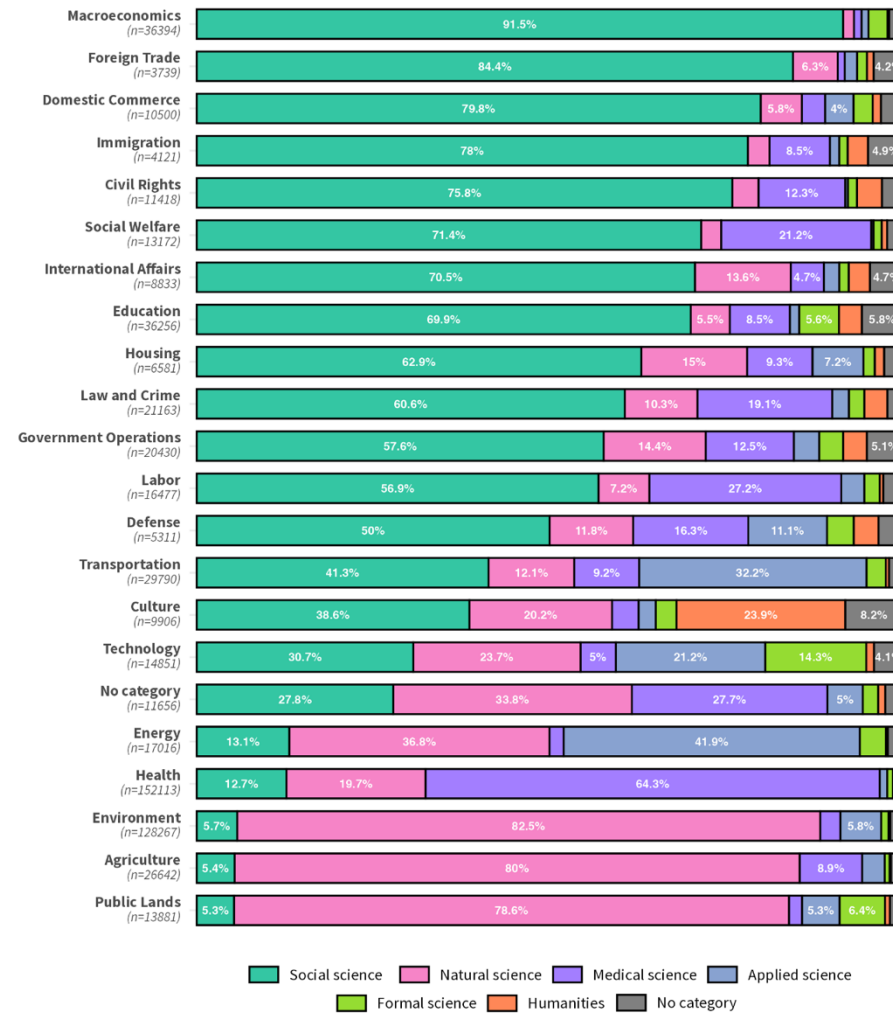


Figure B1: Share of references to scientific fields across policy domains.

Auxiliary information

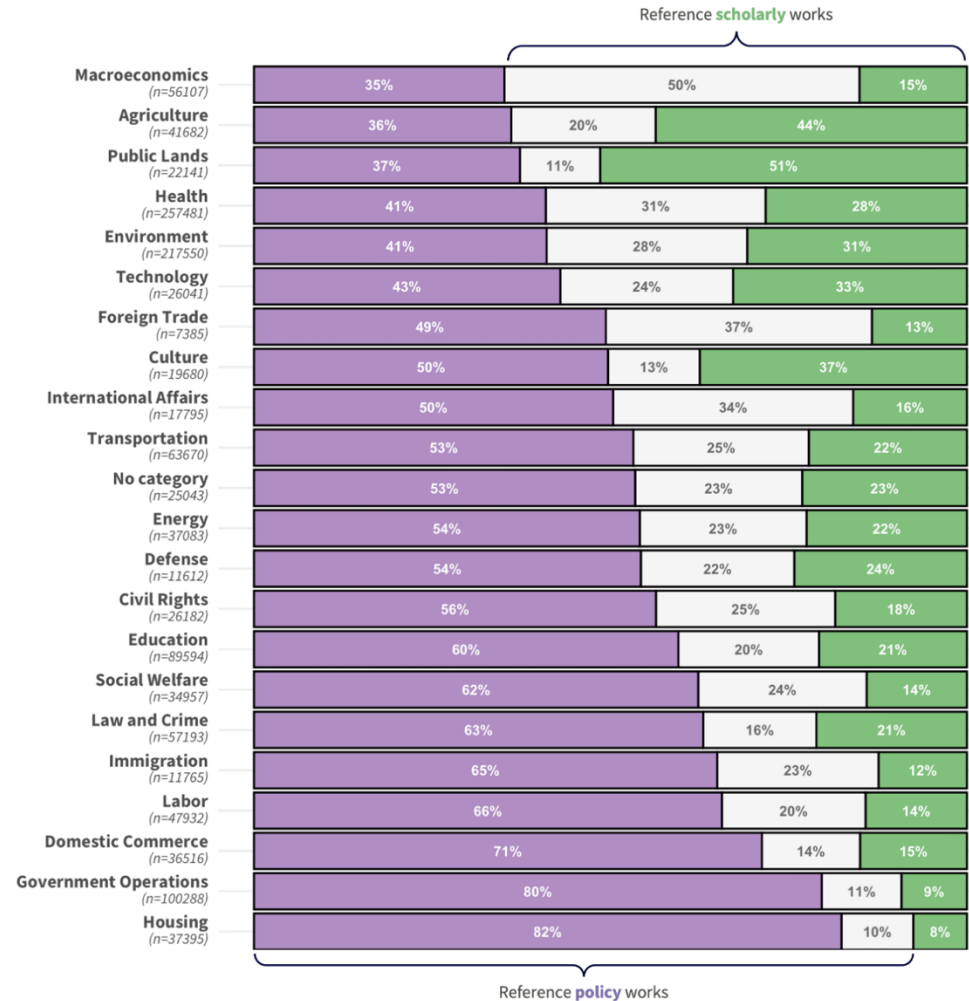


Figure B2: Share of policy documents citing policy, scholarly, or mixed sources across policy domains.