

Professional Gatekeepers of Authoritarian Legality: Evidence from China's Legal Aid Hotlines

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The Puzzle

How do autocrats expand legal access without empowering citizens too much?

▶ Why expand legal access?

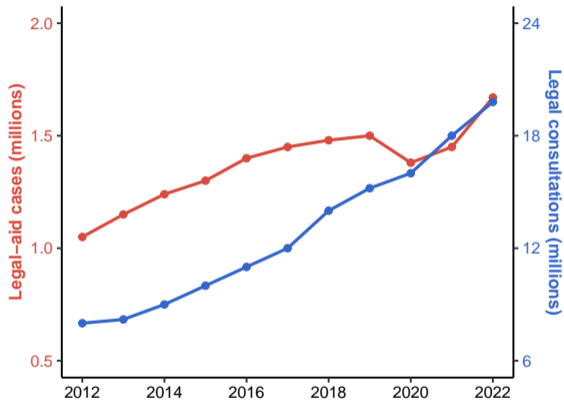
- * signal competence, fairness, and state capacity
- * channel grievances into rule-by-law institutions
- * resolve routine disputes without overt coercion

▶ Why is it risky?

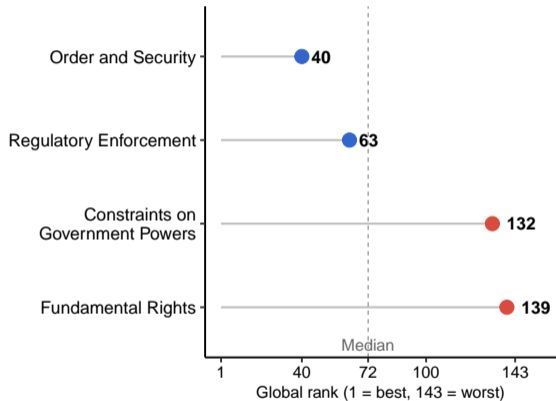
- * actionable legal advice can arm citizens against agencies
- * legal access can fuel petitioning, litigation, and escalation
- * frontline legality can generate backlash if it becomes too empowering

Chinese Context

Expansion of Legal Access in China



China's Rule-of-Law Profile Is Uneven



- ▶ China has expanded legal access, but rule of law remains limited.
- ▶ Lawyers are both frontline providers and gatekeepers of this system.

Research Question and Argument

Research question:

- ▶ How does China use lawyers to deliver legal services while containing legal challenges?

Argument:

- ▶ Lawyers deliver legal aid under political oversight, professional norms, and market incentives.
- ▶ These lawyers decide not only *whether* to respond, but also *what kind of legal service* to provide.

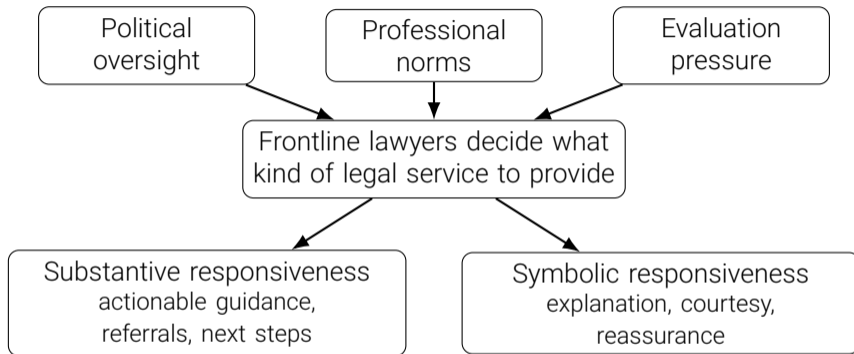
Overview

- ▶ **Design:** a nationwide audit of China's 12348 legal aid hotline
- ▶ **Empirics:** randomized cues on identity, political sensitivity, leverage, and evaluation
- ▶ **Main finding:**
 - * Legal access can expand without broad legal empowerment.
 - * Politically sensitive callers are still answered, but receive less concrete legal service.
 - * Complaint improves the visible side of service more than substantive guidance.
 - * These patterns are strongest under tighter control and weaker among senior lawyers.

Literature and Gap

- ▶ Authoritarian legality research focuses on courts, legislatures, and formal institutions. (Gallagher 2017; Ginsburg and Moustafa 2008; Moustafa 2014; Scheppele 2018; Wang 2015; Whiting 2017)
- ▶ Research on authoritarian responsiveness asks whether officials respond to citizens. (Chen, Pan, and Xu 2016; Grossman and Slough 2022; Malesky and Schuler 2010; Truex 2016)
- ▶ We know much less about frontline legal service and what kind of service citizens receive. (Lipsky 2010; Michelson 2006, 2008; Sandefur 2019)
- ▶ This paper shifts from whether states respond to what kind of service they provide.

Theory



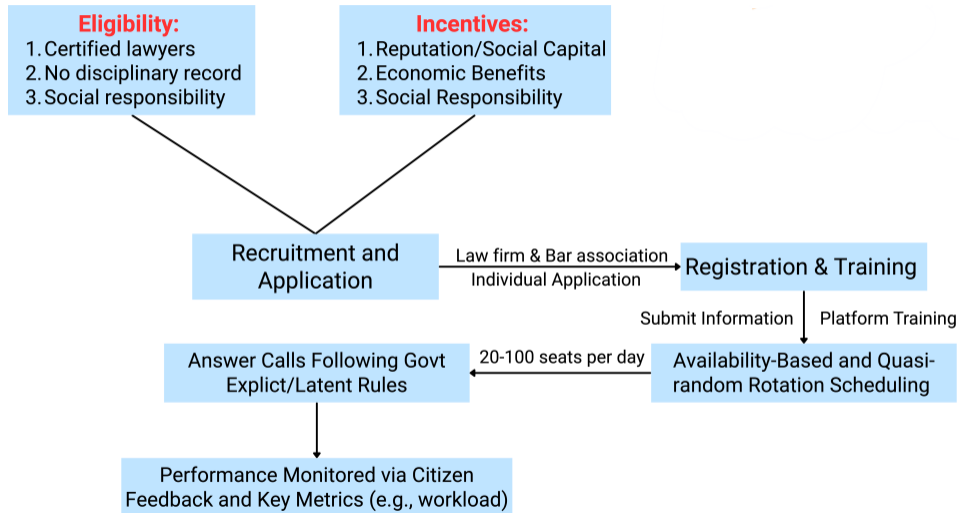
Political risk shifts service from substantive to symbolic responsiveness.
The key divide is not response vs. nonresponse, but recognition vs. empowerment.

China's 12348 Hotline

China's 12348 is a nationwide public legal-service hotline run by justice bureaus.

- ▶ **Purpose:** expands public access to law while maintaining stability.
- ▶ **Staff:** licensed lawyers serving as duty lawyers under local public-service rosters.
- ▶ **Function:** real-time legal consultation, legal-aid screening, referral, and mediation.
- ▶ **Motivation:** stipends, accumulate experience, professional and political networks.
- ▶ **Oversight:** calls are logged for quality control, user evaluations, and govt. supervision.

China's 12348 hotline: Selection

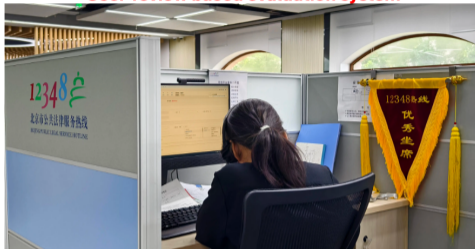


China's 12348 hotline: Workplace

Independent and random assignment



User-review based evaluation system



Internal portals log caller and case details at call start



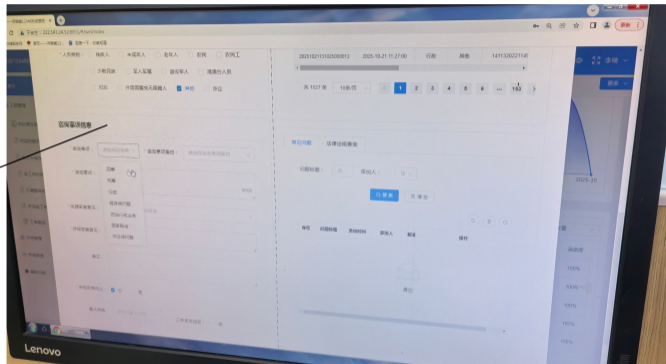
Unique seat ID prevents contamination in experiments



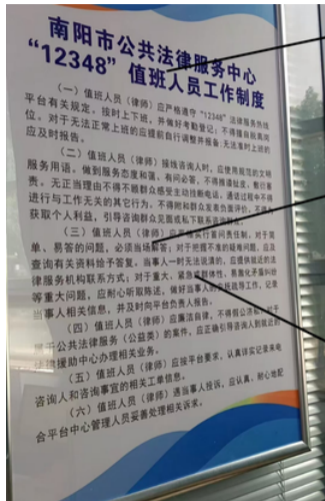
China's 12348 hotline: Protocols

System requires:

- Biographical data (surname, gender, ethnicity, location)
- Identity categories (disability, age, occupation, nationality, Party)
- Case classification (procedural, business/enterprise, administrative/civil/criminal)



China's 12348 hotline: Protocols



12348 Hotline Lawyer Service Protocol

Lawyers must offer **substantive** solutions and concrete remedies for straightforward, procedural, and socioeconomically beneficial inquiries.

Lawyers play a **symbolic** role by listening patiently, calming tensions, and avoiding hasty directives in sensitive collective cases to prevent escalation.

China's 12348 hotline: Protocols

对于待处理未接来电和待回访留言来电都需要当天就进行回访，否则会影响个人的接听率，当天回访后可以联系省热线沟通群的技术人员消除未接的记录，恢复正常的接听率。

Internal Rule:

Staff must erase negative complaints or face reduced call assignments and bureau sanctions.

(Negative caller feedback reflects underlying bureaucratic incentives)

Audit Design

- ▶ **Sample:** 3,200 completed calls across 302 cities
- ▶ **Auditors:** 50 trained callers using a standardized legal problem and scripts [Ethics](#)
- ▶ **Randomized cues:** [Cue list](#)
 - * **political sensitivity:** Uyghur name, petition cue, administrative case, unemployment
 - * **leverage:** job types, Party membership, *hukou*, prior lawyer contact, economic case
 - * **evaluation pressure:** praise cue, complaint cue, or no cue
- ▶ **Field discipline:** blocked by city × week × time; auditors blind to study aims [Design Details](#)

Scripts

Opening and profile

"Hello, Lawyer. My full name is [FULL NAME]."

"I have been living in [DISTRICT], [CITY] for [DURATION]."

"For my notes, could you tell me your worker ID and years of practice?"

Identity and leverage

"I am [local resident / moved for work]."

"My hukou is [HUKOU]. I work as [OCCUPATION / am between jobs]."

"I am [PARTY STATUS]. I [have / have not] consulted a lawyer before."

Case narrative

"My issue concerns [CASE TYPE]. It occurred [MONTH / DATE], involves [AMOUNT], and I have [DOCUMENT TYPE]."

Cue lines before Q1/Q2

If this cannot be solved, I may consider petitioning through lawful channels.

If your guidance is clear and specific, I will leave a top review and a commendation.

If I cannot get concrete help, I may leave a negative evaluation or file a complaint.

Outcome windows

Q1. I want to file a lawsuit. What are the steps, where do I start, and what materials are needed?

Q2. I am not familiar with legal matters. Could you please explain in simpler words?

Color key

- randomized caller attributes
- sensitivity and case-type cues
- evaluation cues
- Q1 and Q2 outcome questions
- realism and control details

Measuring Service Quality

1. Extract Q1/Q2

- Matched audio + transcript
- Keep lawyer Q1/Q2 replies
- Drop intake, setup, cues
- Controls: tone, dialect, traits

2. Score Layers

- gpt-4o-mini: text
- qwen-audio-turbo: audio
- RAs: masked validation
- Auditors: post-call checks

3. Validate + Fuse

- Compare text and audio scores
- Check agreement with RA scores
- Drop weak or noisy items
- Fuse retained items into indices

4. Build Indices

Substantive index

- Accuracy
- Straightforward
- Alternative dimensions

Symbolic index

- Empathy
- Politeness

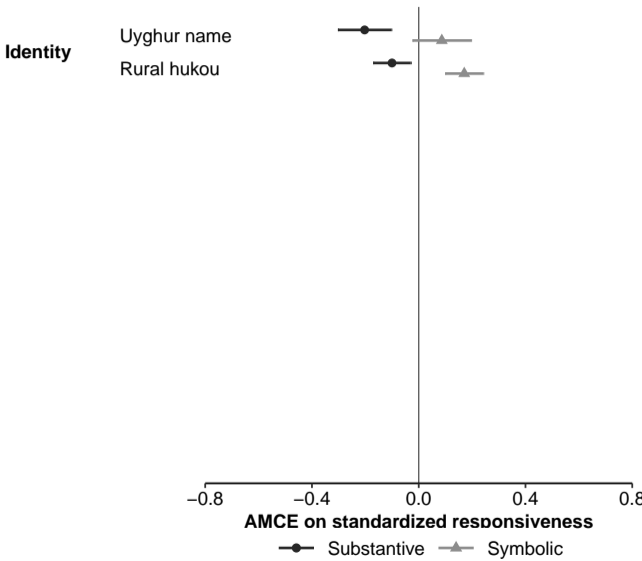
Estimand and Specification

Main estimand: design-specific AMCEs

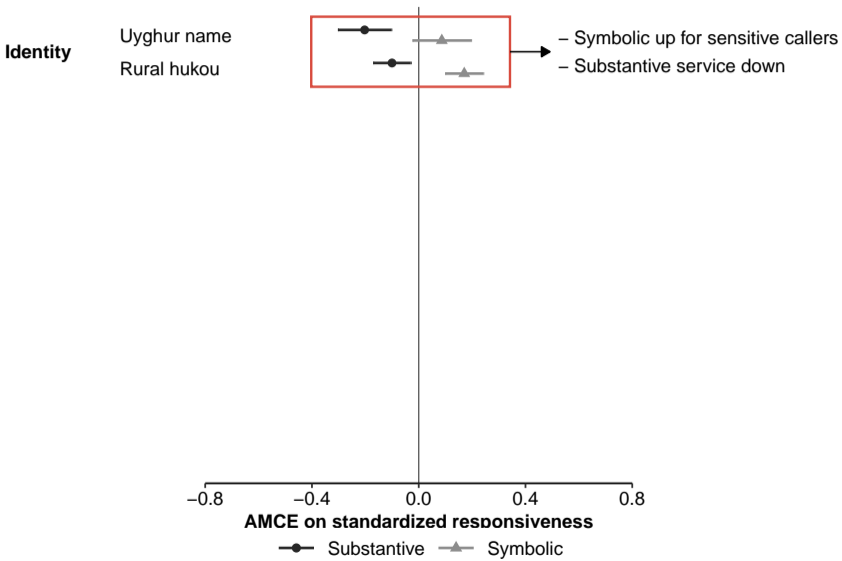
$$y_{icwpa} = \alpha + X_i\beta + T_i\delta + \gamma_1 Z_{\text{base},i} + \gamma_2 Z_{\text{dial},i} + L_i'\eta + \mu_c + \tau_w + \rho_p + \kappa_a + \varepsilon_{icwpa}$$

- ▶ X_i : randomized caller and case cues; T_i : incentive cues
- ▶ $Z_{\text{base},i}$: opening-turn tone; $Z_{\text{dial},i}$: opening-turn dialect; L_i : lawyer gender and seniority
- ▶ Call-level OLS with city, study-week, call-period, and auditor fixed effects.
- ▶ Baseline speech controls absorb delivery heterogeneity unrelated to treatment.
- ▶ Standard errors clustered by city ($N = 302$).
- ▶ Holm-adjusted p -values and randomization inference as checks.

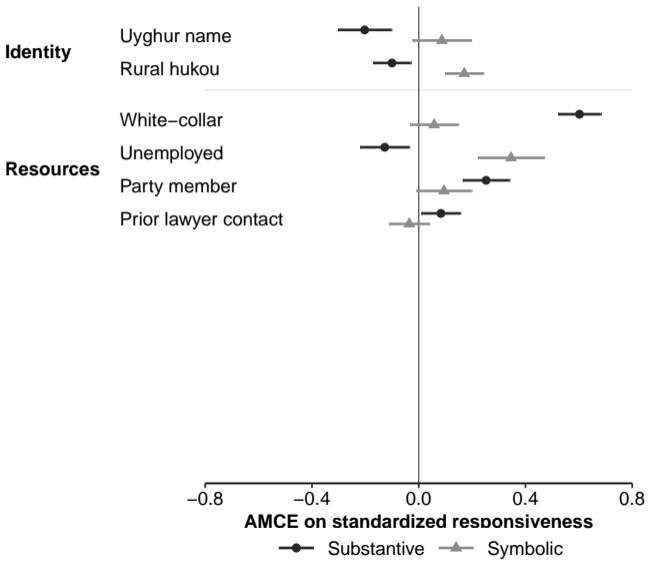
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



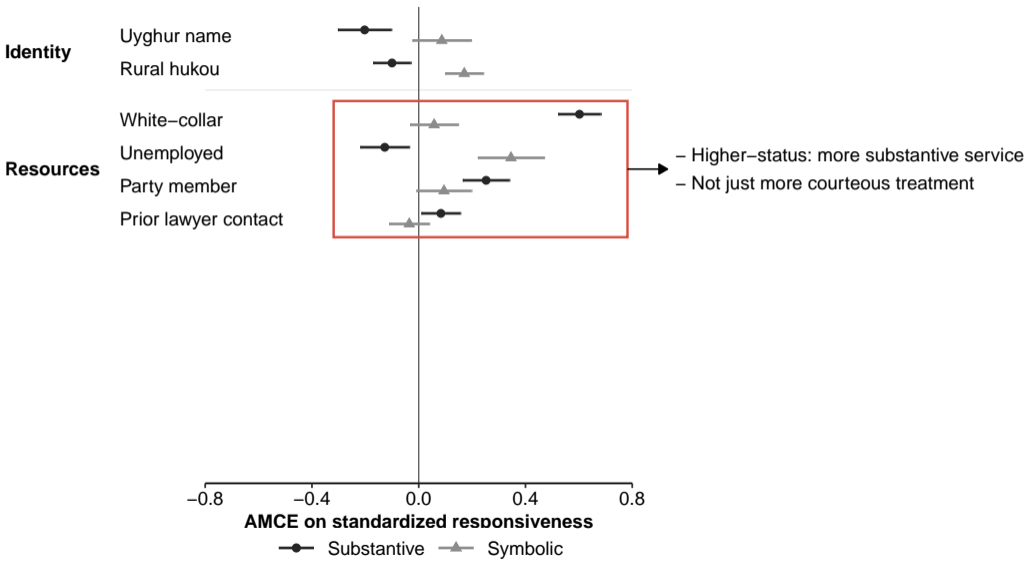
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



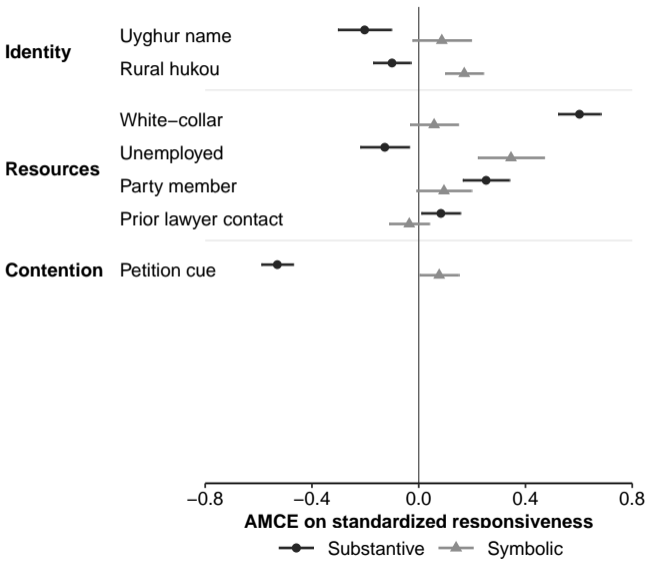
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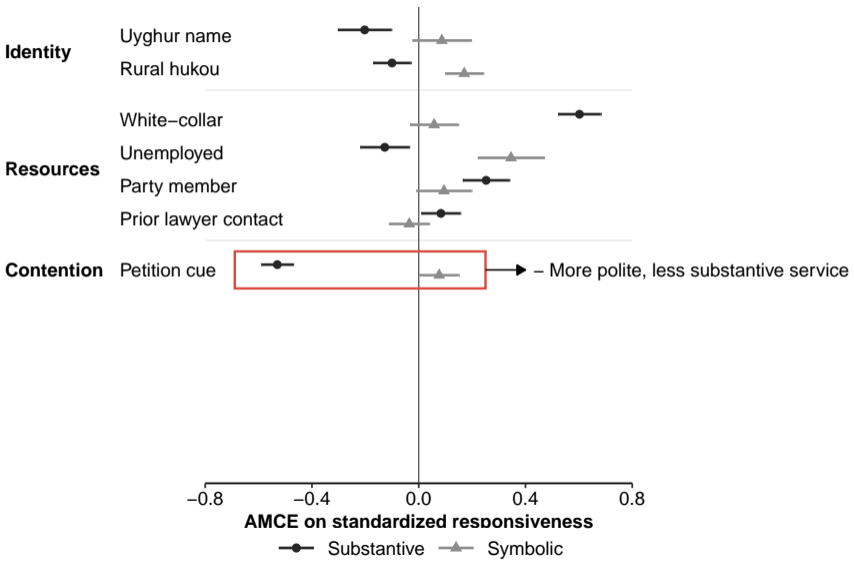
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



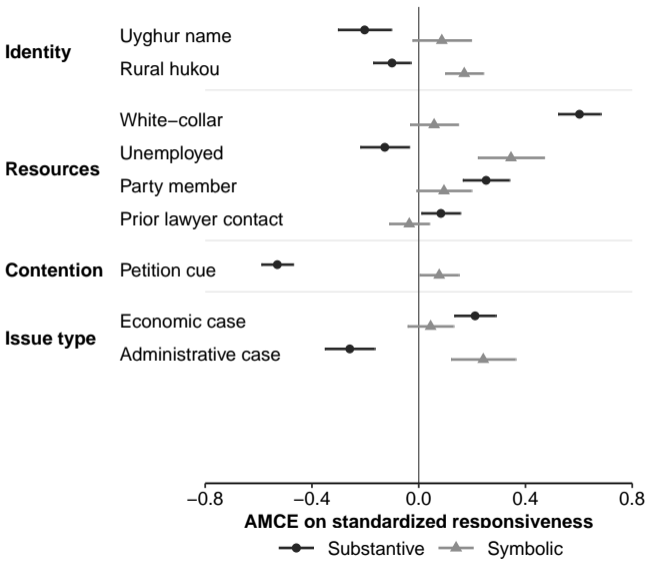
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



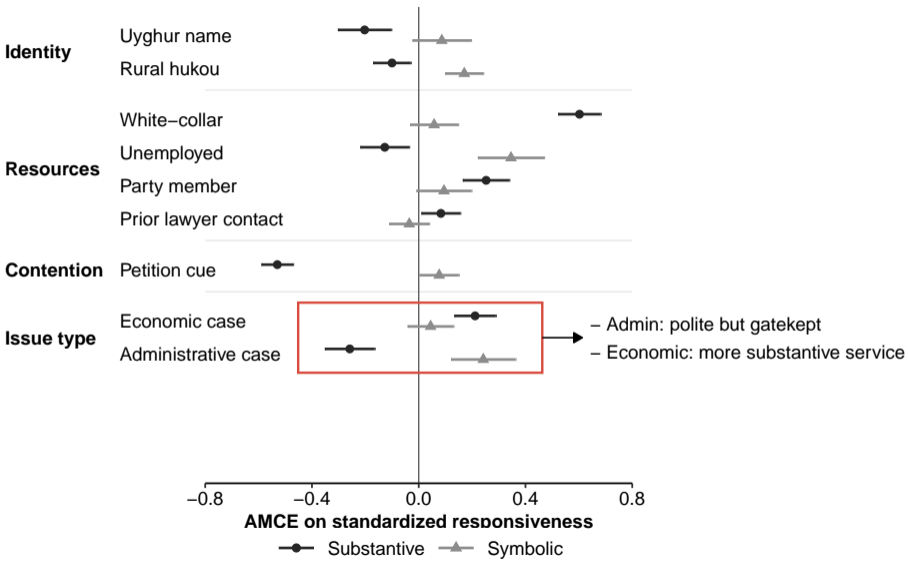
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



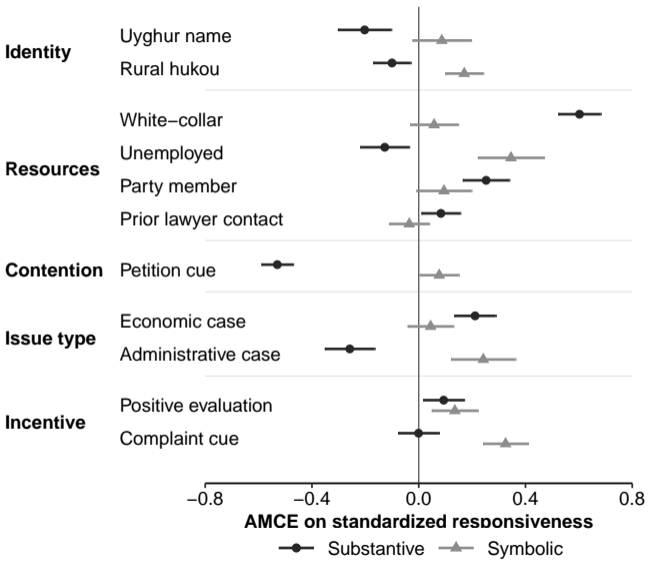
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



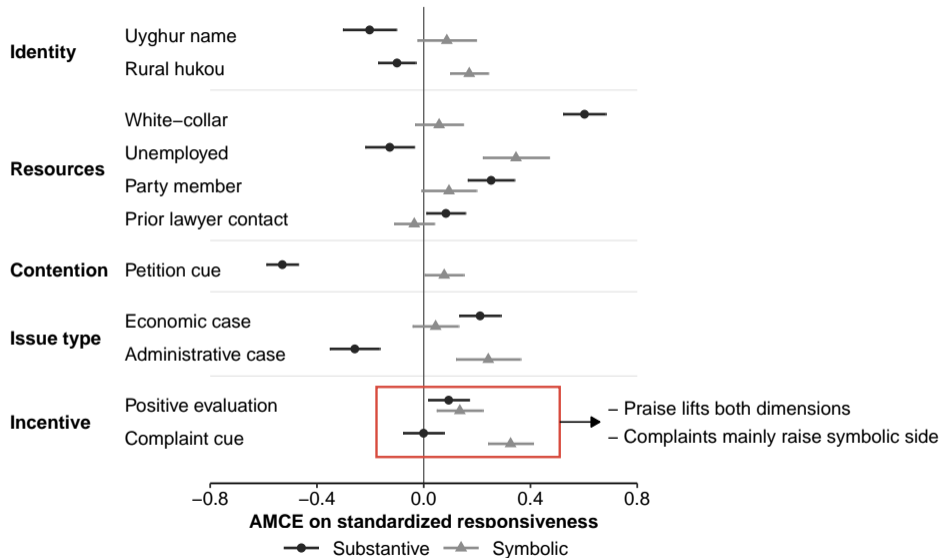
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



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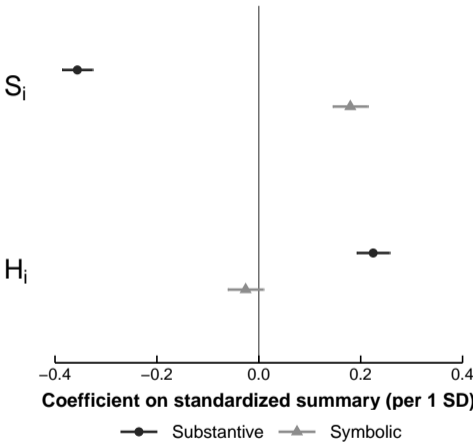
Main Result: Selective Legal Empowerment



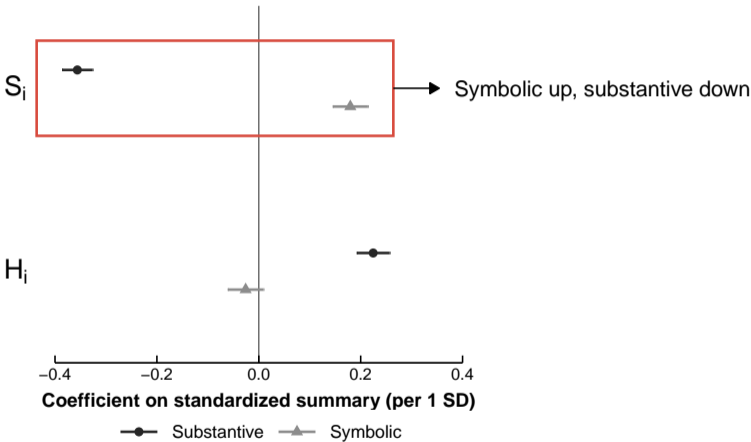
Summary of Selective Legal Service

- ▶ S_i : a political sensitivity summary built from Uyghur-name, petition, unemployment, and administrative-dispute cues.
- ▶ H_i : a leverage summary built from urban hukou, white-collar work, Party membership, prior lawyer contact, and economic-case cues. [S/H definition](#)

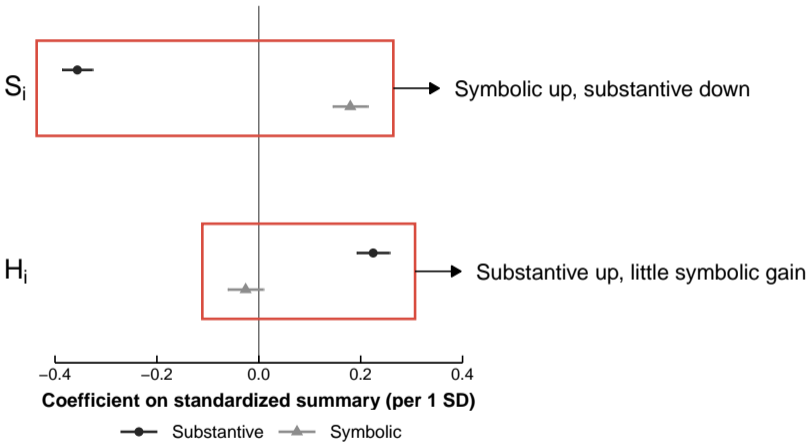
Summary of Selective Legal Service



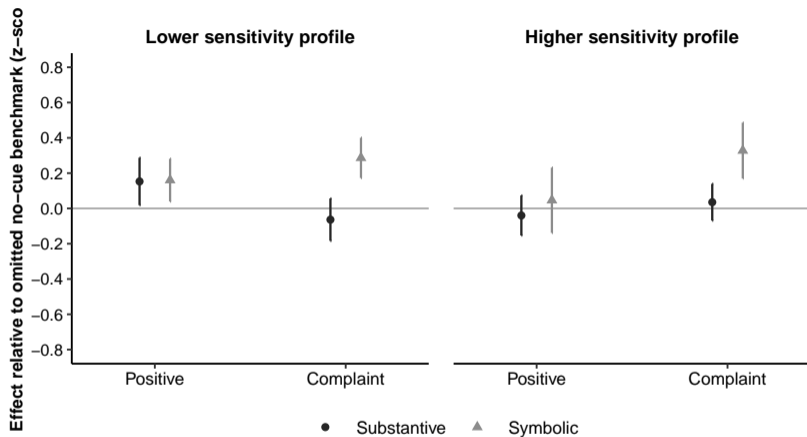
Summary of Selective Legal Service



Summary of Selective Legal Service



How Incentives Change Service



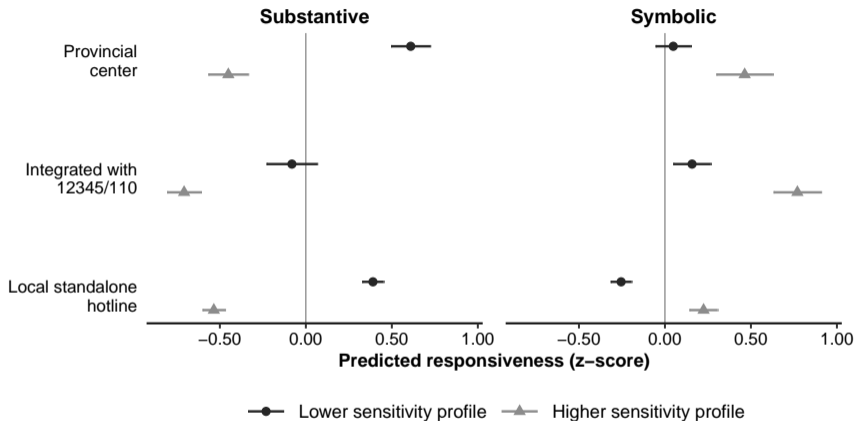
- ▶ Positive evaluation lifts both responsiveness types.
- ▶ Complaint raises symbolic more than substantive service.

Effort shift

Political Oversight: Hotline Types

- ▶ **Provincial centers:** centralized intake, vertical oversight, decoupled from local politics.
- ▶ **Integrated 12345/110:** routed through government-service menus, broad observability.
- ▶ **Local standalone:** lawyers embedded in local bar–bureau panels, relational supervision.
- ▶ These types differ in complaint visibility and coupling to local stability politics.

Political Oversight



- ▶ Provincial centers show the largest substantive gap.
- ▶ Integrated 12345/110 systems show the strongest symbolic compensation.

Professional Social Capital

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness
Higher sensitivity (> mean seniority)	-0.935*** (0.037)	0.487*** (0.043)
Lawyer seniority (centered years)	0.036*** (0.011)	-0.004 (0.010)
Higher sensitivity × lawyer seniority	0.035*** (0.013)	0.008 (0.015)
High-profile effect at junior seniority (p25 = 3 years)	-1.005*** (0.048)	0.471*** (0.053)
High-profile effect at senior seniority (p75 = 7 years)	-0.866*** (0.043)	0.502*** (0.052)
Diff (p75 – p25)	0.138*** (0.052)	0.031 (0.060)
Baseline tone and dialect controls	Yes	Yes
Lawyer gender control	Yes	Yes
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes
Observations	2281	2281

- Senior lawyers narrow the substantive gap but do not change the symbolic pattern.

Robustness and Alternative Explanations

Robustness

- ▶ Holm-adjusted p -values, randomization inference, alternative specifications. Checks
- ▶ Pattern holds across 92% of cities; not driven by outlier sites. Dispersion
- ▶ Substantive meaning: referral rates, satisfaction, human-coded quality. Benchmarks

Alternative explanations

- ▶ Not case difficulty: Uyghur name does not change legal merit. Effort
- ▶ Not measurement artifact: consistent across text, audio, and human layers. Audio
- ▶ Not auditor learning: no convergence over time or repeated exposure. Checks

Heterogeneity

- ▶ By case type, occupation, and incentive \times hotline type. Case Occ. Org.

Conclusion

Main finding

- ▶ States can expand legal access without expanding legal empowerment.
- ▶ Frontline agents selectively allocate the kind of service they provide.
- ▶ Institutional design reshapes the boundary between recognition and empowerment.

Broader implication

- ▶ Expanding formal rights does not guarantee substantive empowerment.
- ▶ The key question is not whether people are heard, but what they receive.

Thank you

Questions and comments welcome

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Appendix

Design & Measurement

- ▶ Randomized Cues
- ▶ Balance Checks
- ▶ Power / MDE
- ▶ How S/H Are Built
- ▶ Field Rules
- ▶ Ethical Justification
- ▶ Measurement
- ▶ Scoring Checks
- ▶ Audio Prosody
- ▶ Delivery Orthogonality

Robustness & Scope

- ▶ Robustness Summary
- ▶ Randomization Inference
- ▶ Holm p -Values
- ▶ Alternative Specs
- ▶ ICW Indices
- ▶ Lee Bounds
- ▶ Selection Reweighting
- ▶ Exposure / Learning
- ▶ Placebo Tests
- ▶ Broad Pattern

Heterogeneity & Descriptives

- ▶ Effort Shift
- ▶ Service Benchmarks
- ▶ Incentive \times Type
- ▶ Incentive Table
- ▶ Market Concentration
- ▶ Timing Heterogeneity
- ▶ Substantive Keywords
- ▶ Symbolic Keywords
- ▶ Case-Type Means
- ▶ Occupation Means

Randomized Cues and Realized Shares

- ▶ **Assignment pool:** near-orthogonal randomization with realism filters
- ▶ **Ethnicity** (Han 0.90; Uyghur 0.10) — 2020 Census benchmark
- ▶ **Residence** (Urban 0.72; Rural 0.28) — Census urban share
- ▶ **Occupation** (White-collar 0.36; Manual 0.48; Unemployed 0.16)
- ▶ **Party membership** (CCP 0.15; Non-member 0.85)
- ▶ **Prior lawyer contact** (Yes 0.30; No 0.70)
- ▶ **Petition cue** (Present 0.30; Absent 0.70)
- ▶ **Case type** (Civil 0.45; Economic 0.25; Administrative 0.30)
- ▶ **Incentive** (Positive / Complaint / None = 1/3 each)
- ▶ **Exclusions:** no economic × unemployed; rare civil × petition; rare unemployed × prior contact

How S and H Are Built

- ▶ **S (sensitivity):** Uyghur name, petition cue, unemployment, and administrative case.
- ▶ **H (leverage):** urban *hukou*, white-collar job, CCP membership, prior lawyer contact, and economic case.
- ▶ These are additive summaries of preregistered cues, not new treatments.
- ▶ The figure compresses the same randomized cues into a simpler contrast.

Field Rules and Exposure Control

- ▶ Calls are blocked by city × study week × time period (10–12; 13–15; 15–17).
- ▶ Failed attempts are retried once after 60–90 minutes, then replaced within the same block.
- ▶ Q1/Q2 order is randomized separately from the profile and incentive cues.
- ▶ Contact stays sparse: at most one completed call per city-week, and calls end once the assigned questions are answered.
- ▶ Worker IDs trigger a one-week cool-off, and SIMs rotate so the same number is not reused within 72 hours.
- ▶ No lawyer is contacted twice in the same study week or given the same full treatment twice.

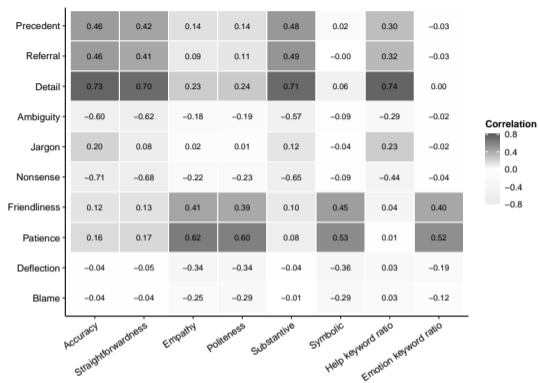
Ethical Justification

- ▶ **Scientific necessity:** consent would defeat the audit
Standard in audit methodology (Gaddis 2018; Foos et al. 2022)
- ▶ **Minimal burden:** brief calls from anonymized cases; no real identifiers
- ▶ **No downstream consequences:** no real case opened, no sanctions triggered
- ▶ **Contact limits:** ≤ 1 call/city/week; hashed worker IDs; aggregate reporting
- ▶ **Auditor protection:** screened, trained, blinded; stop rules for suspicion
- ▶ **Public value:** first causal evidence on legal aid distribution in a 20M-consultation/year system

IRB-approved (UCSD #810665). Conducted per APSA (2020) guidance.

Phillips (2021); Desposato (2016) – ethics of field experiments.

Scoring Checks

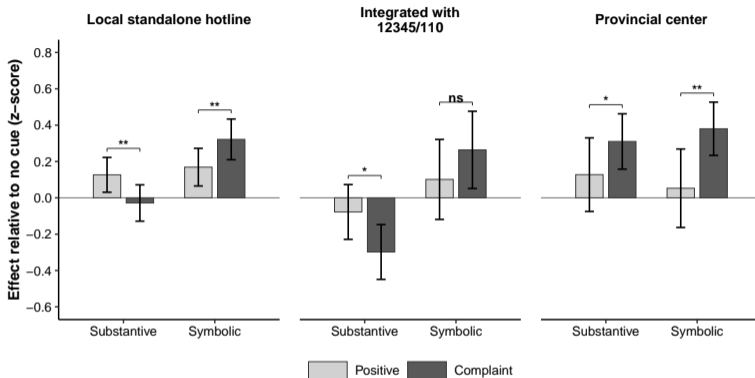


- ▶ Strong convergence across measurement layers ($r > 0.80$)
- ▶ Substantive and symbolic indices related but not redundant ($r \approx 0.02$)

Alternative Dimensions

- ▶ **Core indices:** substantive uses accuracy + straightforwardness; symbolic uses empathy + politeness
- ▶ **Kept separate:** referrals, patience, auditor satisfaction, interruptions, abrupt termination
- ▶ **Auxiliary markers:** constructive and evasive language are reported separately, not folded into the main indices
- ▶ **Bottom line:** appendix dimensions line up with the main pattern but do not redefine the headline outcomes

Organizational Power Changes Incentive Effects

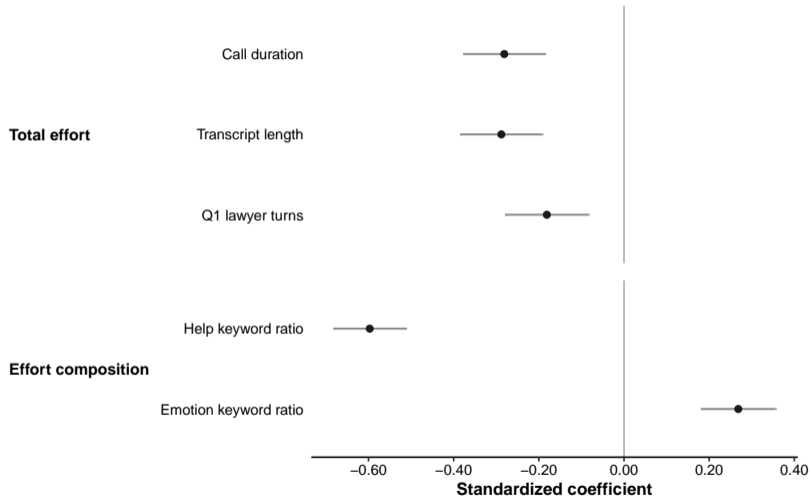


- ▶ In local and integrated systems, complaints favor symbolic responsiveness.
- ▶ Provincial centers are the only type where complaints raise both response types.

Robustness Summary

- ▶ **Alternative aggregation:** inverse-covariance weighted indices preserve all patterns
- ▶ **Multiple testing:** Holm-adjusted p -values – headline effects survive
- ▶ **Randomization inference:** design-based p -values confirm main results
- ▶ **Alternative specifications:** lawyer FE, hotline-level clustering, no controls – ordering unchanged across 6 specifications
- ▶ **Sparse exposure / no learning:** no city contributes more than one completed call per week, and late fielding does not converge toward neutral treatment
- ▶ **Auxiliary text markers:** sensitivity cues suppress constructive language, raise evasive/emotional language
- ▶ **Delivery diagnostics:** cue delivery confirmed for names, petition, case types, incentives

Effort Shift Within Calls



The Pattern Is Broad, Not Just a Few Sites

	City-level gaps	Hotline-level gaps
Sites	299	284
Substantive gap in expected direction	92.3%	92.3%
Symbolic gap in expected direction	78.9%	77.8%

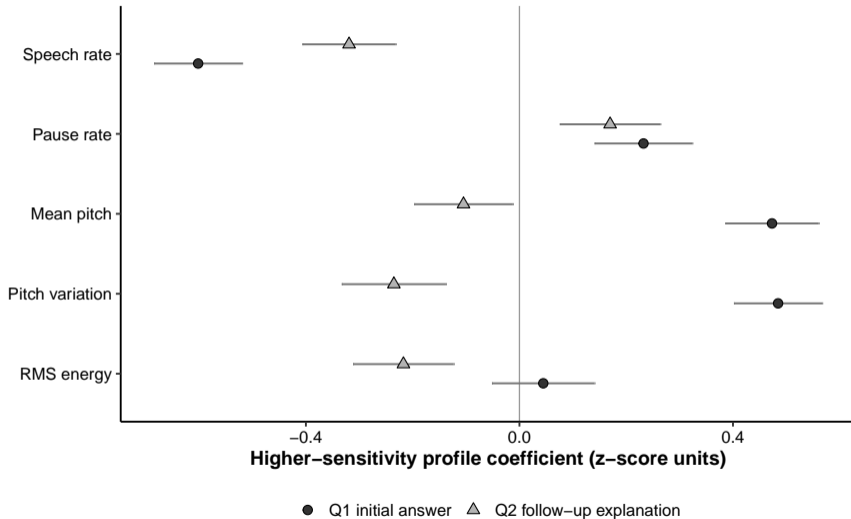
Incentive Results by Hotline Type

Hotline type	Positive effect		Complaint effect	
	Substantive	Symbolic	Substantive	Symbolic
Local standalone	0.127***	0.169***	-0.028	0.322***
Integrated 12345/110	-0.078	0.101	-0.298***	0.264**
Provincial center	0.128	0.053	0.310***	0.380***

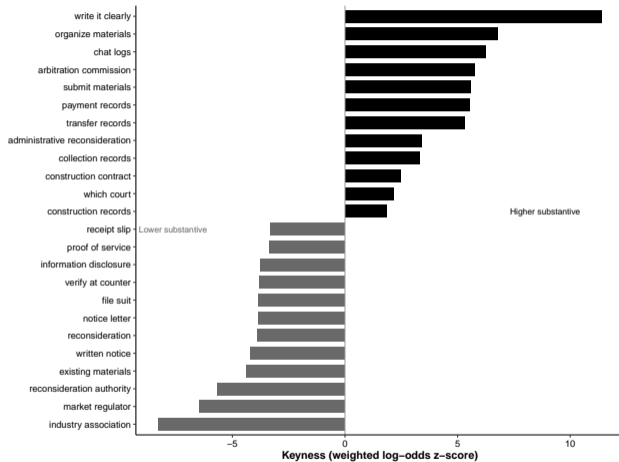
Concrete Service Benchmarks

Cue	Human Q1	Referral	Human Q2	Patience	Satisfaction
Panel A: Caller-side					
Uyghur name	-0.20***	-0.07***	0.04	0.01	-0.15*
Petition cue	-0.51***	-0.17***	0.05	0.02	-0.38***
Admin case	-0.27***	-0.07***	0.20***	0.03	-0.14
Panel B: Incentives					
Positive	0.29***	0.02	0.47***	0.10***	0.28***
Complaint	0.13**	0.08***	0.34***	0.09***	0.21***

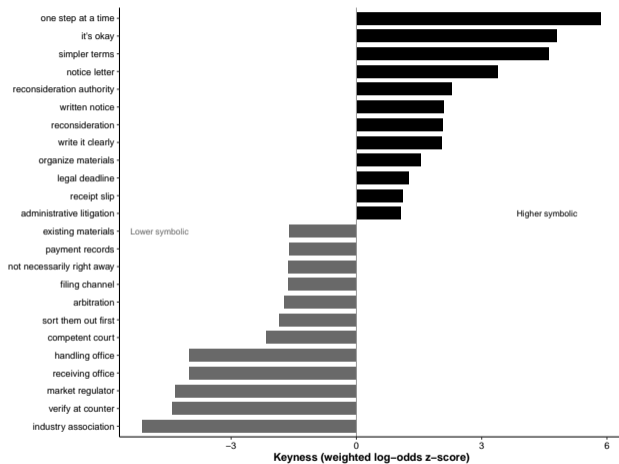
Audio Prosody as Auxiliary Evidence



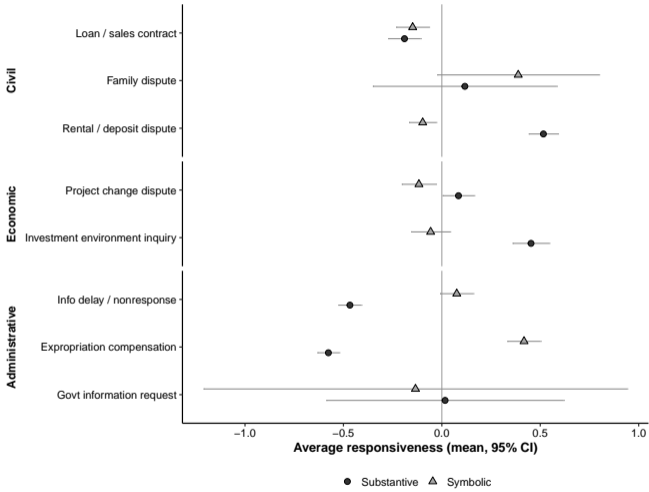
Auxiliary Text Markers: Substantive Content



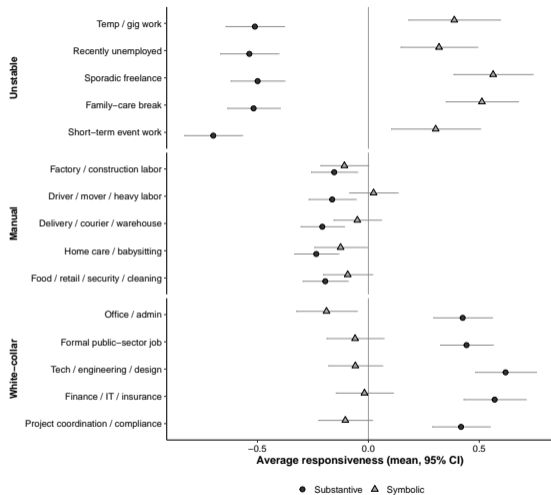
Auxiliary Text Markers: Symbolic Content



Descriptive Heterogeneity by Case Type



Descriptive Heterogeneity by Occupation



Balance Checks: Sensitivity Profile

Panel A: Lower vs Higher sensitivity profile

Variable	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity	Difference	p-value
Provincial center (1=yes)	0.21	0.18	-0.023 (0.015)	0.124
Integrated with 12345/110 (1=yes)	0.15	0.18	0.031** (0.013)	0.019
Call week	5.87	5.72	-0.154 (0.143)	0.281
Call period	2.02	1.97	-0.049 (0.039)	0.209
Auditor gender (1=male)	0.51	0.49	-0.014 (0.024)	0.559
Auditor age	40.09	40.06	-0.028 (0.386)	0.942
Auditor legal knowledge (z)	-0.03	0.04	0.071 (0.046)	0.124
Lawyer gender (1=male)	0.41	0.36	-0.050** (0.022)	0.024
Lawyer seniority (years)	5.04	5.00	-0.043 (0.128)	0.737
Z_{base}	-0.02	0.07	0.092** (0.042)	0.030
Z_{dial}	0.00	-0.02	-0.024 (0.045)	0.596

Balance Checks: Incentive Arms

Panel B: Incentive-arm balance				
Variable	No cue	Positive	Complaint	Omnibus <i>p</i> -value
Provincial center (1=yes)	0.19	0.20	0.21	0.411
Integrated with 12345/110 (1=yes)	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.831
Call week	5.86	5.86	5.75	0.744
Call period	2.03	2.03	1.96	0.117
Auditor gender (1=male)	0.48	0.50	0.52	0.222
Auditor age	40.05	39.82	40.36	0.395
Auditor legal knowledge (<i>z</i>)	-0.03	-0.02	0.03	0.480
Lawyer gender (1=male)	0.39	0.38	0.41	0.513
Lawyer seniority (years)	5.09	4.89	5.11	0.209
<i>Z</i> _{base}	-0.01	0.05	-0.02	0.346
<i>Z</i> _{dial}	0.00	-0.01	-0.01	0.983

Inverse-Covariance Weighted Indices

	Substantive responsiveness		Symbolic responsiveness	
	Main index	ICW index	Main index	ICW index
Uyghur name	-0.203*** (0.051)	-0.155*** (0.052)	0.087 (0.056)	0.038 (0.059)
Rural hukou	-0.100*** (0.036)	-0.077** (0.038)	0.171*** (0.036)	0.158*** (0.039)
White-collar	0.602*** (0.041)	0.546*** (0.044)	0.058 (0.046)	0.215*** (0.047)
Unemployed	-0.127*** (0.047)	-0.111** (0.046)	0.346*** (0.063)	0.230*** (0.065)
Party member	0.252*** (0.045)	0.196*** (0.047)	0.095* (0.053)	0.105** (0.051)
Prior lawyer contact	0.083** (0.037)	0.144*** (0.037)	-0.035 (0.038)	0.025 (0.040)
Petition cue	-0.530*** (0.030)	-0.430*** (0.031)	0.077** (0.037)	0.041 (0.037)
Economic case	0.211*** (0.040)	0.255*** (0.041)	0.045 (0.044)	0.006 (0.047)
Administrative case	-0.258*** (0.048)	-0.190*** (0.052)	0.242*** (0.062)	0.167*** (0.062)
Positive evaluation	0.094** (0.039)	0.245*** (0.039)	0.135*** (0.044)	0.390*** (0.047)
Complaint cue	-0.001 (0.039)	0.083** (0.041)	0.325*** (0.043)	0.256*** (0.043)
Correlation: main vs ICW	0.823		0.746	
Observations	3200	3200	3200	3200
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Delivery Orthogonality: Full Treatment

	Delivery failure	Dial attempts
Uyghur name	0.010 (0.008)	0.027 (0.034)
Rural hukou	0.002 (0.005)	0.002 (0.017)
White-collar	0.005 (0.005)	0.017 (0.017)
Unemployed	0.011* (0.006)	0.041 (0.028)
Party member	-0.002 (0.006)	0.018 (0.022)
Prior lawyer contact	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.013 (0.018)
Petition cue	-0.003 (0.005)	0.025 (0.017)
Economic case	-0.007 (0.005)	-0.009 (0.017)
Administrative case	-0.013* (0.007)	-0.011 (0.019)
Positive evaluation	0.006 (0.005)	0.007 (0.017)
Complaint cue	0.009* (0.005)	0.002 (0.017)
Joint p -value	0.431	0.605
Observations	3200	3200

Delivery Orthogonality: Profile Specification

	Delivery failure	Dial attempts
Higher sensitivity profile	0.000 (0.006)	0.023 (0.023)
Observations	2281	2281

Randomization Inference

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness	Help keyword ratio	Emotion keyword ratio
Higher sensitivity profile	-0.934*** (0.038)	0.487*** (0.043)	-0.597*** (0.044)	0.268*** (0.045)
Conventional <i>p</i> -value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Randomization-inference <i>p</i> -value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Observations	2281	2281	2281	2281
Adjusted R^2	0.240	0.085	0.111	0.020
Baseline tone and dialect controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lawyer controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RI strata	Auditor	Auditor	Auditor	Auditor

Holm-Adjusted p -Values

- ▶ All headline effects (Uyghur, petition, admin case) survive Holm correction at $p < 0.05$.
- ▶ Smaller effects (hukou, party, occupation) survive more selectively.
- ▶ BH/FDR adjustment preserves all main substantive and symbolic contrasts.
- ▶ Hotline-type incentive contrasts: complaint effect on symbolic responsiveness survives in local standalone and provincial systems.
- ▶ Full table: Table A34 in the paper appendix.

Alternative Specifications: Substantive

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Substantive responsiveness						
Uyghur name	-0.203*** (0.051)	-0.207*** (0.051)	-0.272*** (0.068)	-0.194*** (0.052)	-0.203*** (0.051)	-0.206*** (0.052)
Rural hukou	-0.100*** (0.036)	-0.100*** (0.036)	-0.130*** (0.049)	-0.102*** (0.036)	-0.100*** (0.036)	-0.106*** (0.035)
White-collar	0.602*** (0.041)	0.606*** (0.040)	0.594*** (0.052)	0.604*** (0.041)	0.602*** (0.041)	0.593*** (0.041)
Unemployed	-0.127*** (0.047)	-0.110** (0.046)	-0.070 (0.069)	-0.119** (0.049)	-0.127*** (0.047)	-0.090** (0.045)
Party member	0.252*** (0.045)	0.247*** (0.044)	0.277*** (0.060)	0.258*** (0.045)	0.252*** (0.044)	0.207*** (0.043)
Prior lawyer contact	0.083** (0.037)	0.082** (0.036)	0.082 (0.055)	0.076** (0.038)	0.083** (0.036)	0.079** (0.037)
Petition cue	-0.530*** (0.030)	-0.529*** (0.030)	-0.498*** (0.044)	-0.533*** (0.032)	-0.530*** (0.030)	-0.535*** (0.028)
Economic case	0.211*** (0.040)	0.214*** (0.040)	0.246*** (0.054)	0.217*** (0.040)	0.211*** (0.039)	0.188*** (0.039)
Administrative case	-0.258*** (0.048)	-0.258*** (0.046)	-0.302*** (0.065)	-0.254*** (0.049)	-0.258*** (0.047)	-0.292*** (0.047)
Positive evaluation	0.094** (0.039)	0.094** (0.039)	0.062 (0.056)	0.098** (0.039)	0.094** (0.039)	0.107*** (0.040)
Complaint cue	-0.001 (0.039)	-0.010 (0.040)	0.003 (0.055)	0.001 (0.040)	-0.001 (0.039)	0.008 (0.041)

Alternative Specifications: Symbolic

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel B: Symbolic responsiveness						
Uyghur name	0.087 (0.056)	0.082 (0.054)	0.135* (0.078)	0.069 (0.056)	0.087 (0.056)	0.083 (0.052)
Rural hukou	0.171*** (0.036)	0.172*** (0.036)	0.191*** (0.052)	0.176*** (0.037)	0.171*** (0.037)	0.167*** (0.036)
White-collar	0.058 (0.046)	0.065 (0.045)	0.031 (0.060)	0.060 (0.047)	0.058 (0.046)	0.048 (0.045)
Unemployed	0.346*** (0.063)	0.346*** (0.063)	0.334*** (0.089)	0.371*** (0.064)	0.346*** (0.063)	0.361*** (0.061)
Party member	0.095* (0.053)	0.088* (0.052)	0.077 (0.067)	0.090* (0.053)	0.095* (0.052)	0.100** (0.049)
Prior lawyer contact	-0.035 (0.038)	-0.035 (0.039)	-0.056 (0.054)	-0.039 (0.039)	-0.035 (0.038)	-0.042 (0.037)
Petition cue	0.077** (0.037)	0.074** (0.037)	0.058 (0.052)	0.073* (0.037)	0.077** (0.038)	0.096*** (0.037)
Economic case	0.045 (0.044)	0.040 (0.043)	0.040 (0.064)	0.043 (0.044)	0.045 (0.044)	0.022 (0.044)
Administrative case	0.242*** (0.062)	0.243*** (0.061)	0.212** (0.086)	0.243*** (0.062)	0.242*** (0.062)	0.213*** (0.059)
Positive evaluation	0.135*** (0.044)	0.132*** (0.044)	0.136** (0.062)	0.140*** (0.046)	0.135*** (0.043)	0.142*** (0.043)
Complaint cue	0.325*** (0.043)	0.319*** (0.043)	0.311*** (0.059)	0.330*** (0.045)	0.325*** (0.043)	0.322*** (0.042)
Baseline tone and dialect controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lawyer covariates	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Auditor covariates	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lawyer FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Auditor x period FE	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Clustered SE	City	City	City	City	Hotline	City
Observations	3200	3200	3200	3200	3200	3200

Lee Bounds

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness
Main profile coefficient	-0.934	0.487
Delivered-call coefficient	-0.930	0.489
Delivered-call SE	(0.038)	(0.044)
Delivery success rate: high profile	0.987	0.987
Delivery success rate: low profile	0.987	0.987
Lee trimming share	0.000	0.000
Lee lower bound	-0.930	0.489
Lee upper bound	-0.930	0.489

Selection Reweighting

	Substantive (main)	Substantive (reweighted)	Symbolic (main)	Symbolic (reweighted)
Higher sensitivity profile	-0.934 ^{***} (0.038)	-0.865 ^{***} (0.045)	0.487 ^{***} (0.043)	0.509 ^{***} (0.062)
Selection reweighting	No	Yes	No	Yes
Lawyer gender control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lawyer seniority control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2281	2281	2281	2281

Exposure: Prior Hotline Contacts

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness
Panel A: Prior hotline contacts		
Higher sensitivity profile at mean prior contacts	-0.934*** (0.037)	0.486*** (0.043)
Additional difference per prior contact	-0.036*** (0.011)	-0.028** (0.014)
Implied effect at 25th percentile of prior contacts	-0.831*** (0.048)	0.566*** (0.060)
Implied effect at 75th percentile of prior contacts	-1.010*** (0.046)	0.426*** (0.052)

Exposure: Prior Lawyer and City Contacts

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness
Panel B: Prior lawyer contacts		
Higher sensitivity profile at mean prior contacts	-0.935*** (0.038)	0.488*** (0.043)
Additional difference per prior contact	0.006 (0.031)	-0.042 (0.043)
Implied effect at 25th percentile of prior contacts	-0.940*** (0.049)	0.526*** (0.058)
Implied effect at 75th percentile of prior contacts	-0.934*** (0.038)	0.483*** (0.043)
Panel C: Prior city contacts		
Higher sensitivity profile at mean prior contacts	-0.933*** (0.038)	0.488*** (0.043)
Additional difference per prior contact	-0.022 (0.016)	-0.031 (0.020)
Implied effect at 25th percentile of prior contacts	-0.881*** (0.051)	0.564*** (0.062)
Implied effect at 75th percentile of prior contacts	-0.967*** (0.049)	0.439*** (0.055)
Baseline tone and dialect controls	Yes	Yes
Lawyer controls	Yes	Yes
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes
Observations	2281	2281

Placebo and Reshuffle Tests

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness	Help keyword ratio	Emotion keyword ratio
Actual coefficient	-0.934	0.487	-0.597	0.268
Placebo mean	-0.003	-0.001	0.001	-0.002
Placebo SD	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047
Placebo 2.5th pct.	-0.092	-0.088	-0.089	-0.090
Placebo 97.5th pct.	0.087	0.101	0.094	0.090
Placebo tail probability	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Power and Minimum Detectable Effects

Comparison	Raw n per level/cell	Effective n after DE	Approx. MDE (SD)
Binary attribute main effect (50/50 split)	1600	1081	0.12
Three-level attribute, pairwise contrast	1067	721	0.15
Three-arm incentive, pairwise contrast	1067	721	0.15
Balanced 2×2 interaction	800 per cell	541	0.24

Market Concentration Moderator

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness
Higher sensitivity profile	-0.791*** (0.069)	0.420*** (0.072)
Higher sensitivity × provider concentration (HHI)	-0.426** (0.171)	0.201 (0.196)
Implied high-profile effect at low concentration (p25 = 0.122)	-0.843*** (0.052)	0.444*** (0.054)
Implied high-profile effect at high concentration (p75 = 0.541)	-1.021*** (0.051)	0.528*** (0.064)
Difference: high minus low concentration	-0.178** (0.072)	0.084 (0.082)
Baseline tone and dialect controls	Yes	Yes
City, study week, call period, auditor FEs	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes
Observations	2281	2281

Timing Heterogeneity

	Substantive responsiveness	Symbolic responsiveness
Panel A: Time of day (morning/noon/afternoon)		
Higher sensitivity profile in morning	-0.915*** (0.070)	0.543*** (0.080)
Additional difference in noon period	-0.033 (0.096)	-0.086 (0.112)
Additional difference in afternoon period	-0.024 (0.098)	-0.084 (0.110)
Implied high-profile effect in noon	-0.948*** (0.064)	0.457*** (0.079)
Implied high-profile effect in afternoon	-0.939*** (0.067)	0.459*** (0.073)
Panel B: Early vs late fielding weeks		
Higher sensitivity profile in early fielding weeks	-0.848*** (0.051)	0.584*** (0.062)
Additional difference in late fielding weeks	-0.157** (0.075)	-0.176** (0.089)
Implied high-profile effect in late fielding weeks	-1.005*** (0.055)	0.409*** (0.062)
Baseline tone and dialect controls	Yes	Yes
Lawyer controls	Yes	Yes
Auditor FEs	Yes	Yes
SEs clustered by city	Yes	Yes
Observations	2281	2281