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Interest group access to policymaking in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

There are more than 2,000 interest groups in Ireland that play a key role in policy development. This paper explores which of these groups have access to Irish policymaking across various political arenas. It does so by examining original data from 2018, gained through large-N survey research on over 300 active interest groups, including business groups, firms, professional organisations, NGOs, citizen groups and consultancies. The analysis focusses on four key venues of policymaking which lobbyists seek to influence: the media, government departments, the Dáil and state agencies. We find that lobbying access in Ireland is similar to other West European countries, but also different. Organisations with higher organisational capacity and that hire revolving door lobbyists are more likely to be frequent visitors of almost all arenas compared to other groups. This is similar to existing accounts of bias in lobbying access reported in other countries. However, in contrast to scholarship focussing on other European political systems, access is not biased in favour of economic groups. The analysis fills an important empirical gap in the quantitative study of lobbying and adds an otherwise understudied perspective of non-state actor engagement in Irish politics.

KEYWORDS Access; interest groups; lobbying; public policy; influence

Introduction

Lobbying is a highly relevant topic in Irish policy studies. It describes an activity of political communication aimed at influencing policy outputs generally carried out by interest groups. Such organisations represent business and professional interests, NGOs, citizen groups, politically active firms, or specialised consultancies hired to lobby on behalf of a third-party organisation (Baroni, Carroll, Chalmers, Marquez, & Rasmussen, 2014).¹ In 2019, more than 2,000 organisations populated the corridors of Irish politics, engaging in over 6,700 attempts to influence.² Despite cogent accounts of the relevance of lobbying in Ireland (Adshead, 1996; Morrissey, 1986; Murphy, 2010,

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2017), little is known about *who gets regular access* to policymaking in Ireland and why. Binderkrantz, Pedersen, and Beyers (2017a, p. 306) define access as ‘instances when a group has entered a political arena (parliament, administration, or media) passing a threshold controlled by relevant gatekeepers (politicians, civil servants, or journalists)’. As such, these gatekeepers control the ease of access. This study thus aims to answer the following: which interest groups get access to arenas of policymaking and public debate more frequently and why; and which gatekeepers grant access to whom? The question of interest group access to ‘arenas’, a term which we use interchangeably with ‘institutional venues’ throughout this paper, significantly provides a deeper understanding of the role of non-state actors in Irish politics. This paper examines four main venues lobbyists seek to influence: the media, government departments (ministries), the Dáil, and state agencies.

Evidence from other countries reveals that lobbying access to political institutions and the media is often biased. The recent wave of European scholarship finds that organisations with more resources that represent economic interests (as opposed to non-economic interests) tend to dominate access to policymaking across different arenas (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2015; Mahoney, 2008; Rasmussen & Gross, 2015). Dür and Mateo (2016, p. 5) specifically note that a prototype of a ‘lobbying insider’ is a well-resourced business association that seeks to access the executive, while ‘lobbying outsiders’ are citizen groups accessing legislative institutions or the media. Others have noted that lobbyists deem one venue more important than another, depending on the circumstances (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2020). For example, barriers to enter public and online consultations are relatively low (Rasmussen, Carroll, & Lowery, 2014); hence, the threshold that groups need to pass by relevant gatekeepers (such as politicians and civil servants) is relatively low. In contrast, the ability to directly meet gatekeepers has instead a much higher threshold (Crepaz, Hanegraaff, & Salgado, 2021).

Large-N European data collection projects, such as the Interarena (Binderkrantz et al., 2020) and the Comparative Interest Group Survey (CIG, Beyers, Fink-Hafner, Maloney, Novak, & Heylen, 2020), investigate these trends in lobbying access at the macro-level to explore and understand system-level patterns of interest representation. They have found that bias in access is surprisingly consistent. Recent work finds that media access is biased in favour of economic groups in Spain, the UK and Denmark, despite the countries’ differences in media and politics (Binderkrantz, Bonafont, & Halpin, 2017b). Drawing from CIG data, Crepaz et al. (2021) find that state funded organisations in four European countries are more likely to be contacted by policymakers for privileged access. Even at the EU level, resources consistently increase an organisation’s capacity to access EU institutions (Coen, Katsaitis, & Vannoni, 2021; Crepaz et al., 2021; Rasmussen & Gross, 2015).

While there are large-N studies collecting survey data and mapping the interest group population for many countries,³ related research on Ireland is scarce. Certainly, *IPS* published significant work on lobbying and interest representation in Ireland: Murphy (2010) assessed how established groups, such as the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), and Ibec, engage in lobbying during elections. Dür and Mateo (2010) investigated the lobbying strategies employed by Irish associations to access EU decision-making.⁴ Other scholars have notably examined interest group dynamics in specific policy areas (Morrissey, 1986; Torney, 2017), in relation to social partnership or specific groups (Adshead, 1996, 2011), during specific economic circumstances (Chari & Bernhagen, 2011), and regarding lobbying regulation (Crepaz, 2020; Murphy, 2017). Recently, Huwyler and Martin (2021, p. 1) offered insights into lobbying in the Dáil through an examination of parliamentary questions, arguing that 'lobbying does impact legislative behaviour, particularly when communication involved higher levels of 'social presence''.

Despite the extant literature's insights, more could be done to map the Irish system of interest representation. Large N-investigations offer insights into lobbying and access to policymaking, allowing for comparisons between lobbying insiders and outsiders and providing an otherwise absent benchmark to assess bias (Lowery et al., 2015). Such analyses complement case studies focusing on instances of influence of specific groups, circumstances or policy areas (Adshead, 1996, 2011; Morrissey, 1986; Torney, 2017). Additionally, the study of lobbying access adds to the more specific evidence on the impact of lobbying that is collected with regards to EU legislation and legislative activity in the Dáil (Dür & Mateo, 2010; Huwyler & Martin, 2021).

While access does not equal influence, it is a recognised and useful way to understand the impact of lobbying on policy development. First, it can be observed, while influence often evades the researcher's eye (Binderkrantz et al., 2017a). Secondly, it is finite: gatekeepers can only provide access to a certain number of organisations; hence access produces insiders and outsiders, with the latter having less influence than the former (Lowery et al., 2015). While forces of structural power must be acknowledged, there is little evidence that rare access translates into policy influence. Those with regular and frequent access are therefore more likely to influence. Consequently, the study of the determinants of access is a helpful way to understand which factors shape public policy.

Of course, some may contend that CIG and others have shown that access is surprisingly consistent across European states as discussed above, so why study Ireland? Ireland represents a significant (and in some regards, unique) case worth exploring on several counts.

First, its unique electoral system, the single transferable vote system (STV), which produces strong incentives for TDs (Members of Parliament)

to pay attention to their constituency may reveal nuances about grassroots lobbying not found in other European countries using traditional PR, plurality and mixed systems. Secondly, its media system characterised by a relatively small national press, a weak local press, and a predominantly national state-licensed TV and radio sector might produce different incentives for organisations to access the media, since media access guarantees nationwide visibility. Thirdly, the service-oriented economy, based on low corporate tax, attracts a high concentration of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) in the IT and pharmaceutical sectors, producing a vibrant business community with strong access resources. Such firms pursue political activity both nationally and at the EU-level, where they account for a large share of lobbying in Brussels (Coen et al., 2021). Finally, moderate levels of revolving doors between the public and private sectors (Baturo & Arlow, 2018) may impact the nature of lobbying, meaning that the mapping of access to Irish policymaking can equally contribute to the larger interest group and public policy literature.

To understand who gains access to Irish policymaking across various political arenas, this study employs survey data on lobbying and access from 312 politically active interest groups in 2018. The paper tests classical arguments around bias in access, taking both a supply side and a demand side perspective (Binderkrantz et al., 2017a). That is, access sought by lobbyists and access granted by political gatekeepers. The analysis is focussed on four political arenas which are representative of key institutions in policymaking: the media, government departments (ministries), the Dáil (parliament), and state agencies. This represents a widely recognised way of studying access. Different venues provide different opportunities for interest groups to voice their concerns (Beyers, 2004; Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Holyoke, 2003). As a result, access to four arenas is considered separately. As discussed in the paper, there are different types of interest groups that seek to influence these venues: economic groups (which include business associations, firms, and professional groups) and non-economic groups (non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, and think tanks). The resources that the groups have at their disposal will vary.

We explain lobbying access to these venues regarding differences in group type, structural resources, organisational capacity, and the reliance on revolving door lobbyists. Our conclusions consolidate previous findings (Dür & Mateo, 2016) on lobbying access in other western European countries: better endowed organisations are more likely to access policymaking more frequently. However, Ireland appears to be an outlier as far as business lobbying is concerned: economic actors, such as business groups, firms and professional associations, do not appear to dominate access in insider arenas including government departments and agencies. Moreover, despite the growing relevance of firms as political actors globally (Aizenberg &

Hanegraaff, 2020; Berkhout, Beyers, Braun, Hanegraaff, & Lowery, 2018), firms are not found to have access advantages over other organisations in Ireland. Finally, we highlight that revolving door lobbyists can strategically enter media, parliamentary and government arenas. Taken together, these findings consolidate the view that despite rising pluralism in interest representation, Ireland's policymaking is dominated by well-endowed organisations and associations with key links to political institutions. These groups, nevertheless, represent both economic *and* non-economic interests.

Interest group access to four venues of policymaking

This section identifies the five hypotheses to be tested. They revolve around access to key political arenas, namely the media (H1), government departments (H2), Dáil Eireann (H3) and state agencies (H4). We justify the order of our discussion by considering first what is traditionally considered to be an outside arena of influence. We then turn to those venues of direct influence involved in both policy formulation (government ministries and parliament) and policy implementation (regulatory agencies). We also hypothesise a potential relationship between revolving door lobbyists and access to the four venues (H5). We consider each in turn.

Interest group research traditionally classifies media as an outside venue of indirect influence, where lobbyists mobilise support through public opinion, signal activity to their membership and communicate preferences to policymakers through the news. Such indirect lobbying has thus been considered less influential, utilised by less well-resourced groups such as NGOs that cannot gain direct policymaking access because politicians are less accessible than journalists for these groups (Beyers, 2004).

Recent studies dispel this view, highlighting that the media is a key venue of lobbying for many organisations: those that expect to lose out in the competition to influence might strategically lobby the media to gain advantage (Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020). This may explain why Binderkrantz et al. (2015) find no significant difference between different group types regarding media access, while others argue that economic interests with high financial capacity may actually target the media to increase their chances to influence policy (Aizenberg & Hanegraaff, 2020; Aizenberg & Müller, 2021; Thrall, 2006). From a *demand side* vantage, journalists would be more inclined to give access to legitimate and reliable sources with established policymaking positions, namely insiders (Thrall, 2006). From a *supply side* perspective, insider groups seek the media to 'motivate policymakers to address particular issues in ways that are favourable to the organisation [...], and strengthen relationships to policymakers' (Trapp & Laursen, 2017, p. 143). This holds also for firms, which were initially believed to shy away from lobbying the media to avoid scrutiny from the public (Mitchell, Hansen, & Jepsen, 1997),

but have been recently found to actively seek media access to increase their chances to influence policy (Aizenberg & Müller, 2021).⁵

Authors thus argue that it is erroneous to consider media as an outside venue given its *agenda-setting* role (Aizenberg & Hanegraaff, 2020; Trapp & Laursen, 2017). By identifying a policy problem, framing it and then exposing it, the media allows issues to travel from the interest group agenda to the government one (Coen et al., 2021). However, the importance of this vehicle depends on its institutional characteristics, that is the media system (Baumgartner & Chaqués Bonafont, 2015; Binderkrantz et al., 2017b). From a lobbyist's vantage, fragmentation of the media industry and partisan bias might fracture their message and minimise the audience of citizens and politicians.

Although Ireland is traditionally classified as a liberal model of media and politics along with the UK and US (Hallin & Mancini, 2011), its system has a comparatively more concentrated media sector with the dominance of national print broadsheets and a strong presence of the state-owned RTÉ as the main TV and radio broadcaster. While not necessarily unusual for a small country, these characteristics produce specific incentives for interest groups to lobby the media arena of TV and radio. In addition, because print receives little public funding, only a few broadsheets are prominent nationally while local papers never reach high circulation levels (O'Malley, Brandenburg, Flynn, McMenamin, & Rafter, 2014). Most importantly, reporting is described as impartial and free from partisan bias or intervention (Brandenburg, 2005). These conditions should make media access attractive for interest groups because guaranteeing national visibility empowers lobbyists to reach out to the public, frame a topic favourably, and send cues to policymakers. Media access in Ireland may therefore not be an escape route for interest groups that cannot access other venues of policymaking (Beyers, 2004). Rather, competition over media access is expected to favour insiders, such as economic groups, that should be able to secure more frequent access given the greater resources at their disposal.

H1 Media: Economic (and well-resourced) interests are more likely to have more frequent access to the media compared other groups.

Despite the executive's importance in policy development, surprisingly there is little research in Europe on lobbyists' access to government departments, a term we use interchangeably with ministries. Examples taken from the study of access to the institutions of the European Union can, nevertheless, provide a guiding framework (Bouwen, 2004; Dür & Mateo, 2016; Pakull, Marshall, & Bernhagen, 2020). Theoretically, executive institutions, as opposed to legislative ones, tend to *demand* technical information and expertise, relevant for the formulation of policy (Bouwen, 2004; Coen et al., 2021, p. 131). The structural and organisational resources available to economic

groups place them in a dominant position to *supply* technical information to ministers and government ministries, especially on regulatory matters (Dür & Mateo, 2016; Flöthe, 2019a, 2019b).

This is also significant in Ireland: its economy is built on a strong services sector, supported by large capital inflows from the Single Market and the US. Investments are supported by low corporate tax, precipitating many MNEs to establish their European Headquarters in Ireland, as seen in the IT and pharma sectors. The role of the government is mostly regulatory in nature (Chari & Bernhagen, 2011). Even in social, housing and health policies the tendency since the 1990s to liberalise service provision has meant more regulation, and less redistribution. Social housing, for example, is mostly provided by private actors administered through rental supplement schemes (Dukelow & Considine, 2017). Similarly, in the healthcare sector, with more than 50% of the population covered by private voluntary insurance (predominantly by statutory corporation VHI), the government's role in guaranteeing access to health is a regulatory one (Burke, Normand, Barry, & Thomas, 2016).

Finally, the legacy of social partnership provided key economic actors privileged access to government (Adshead, 2011). Despite non-economic groups being part of this process in the voluntary pillar, research has shown that such groups have been at the periphery with little input (Murphy, 2002). It is unlikely that such insider/outsider patterns disappeared with the end of social partnership. Other research on lobbying conducted where corporatism is weakening demonstrates that patterns of privileged access remain even if not institutionalised (Öberg, 2016).

With these observations in mind, access to government departments (ministers and their staff in government) is expected to be biased in favour of traditional insiders. In other words, business groups, firms (and consultancies representing them), professional associations and better-resourced organisations are expected to dominate this venue. This should be valid not only because of their structural and organisational resource advantage, but also because ministers favour access given the technical information that such groups can offer.

H2 Government: Economic (and well-resourced) interests are more likely to have more frequent access to government departments compared other groups.

Access to parliaments and assemblies is expected to differ from access to government. Exchange theorists recognise parliaments as institutions that tend to *demand* so-called political information, as opposed to technical information (Dür & Mateo, 2016). Elected representatives in parliament are in fact interested in considering the voice of their constituency in decision-making. Ireland's STV electoral system and the weakness of its local government

institutions (Breathnach, O'Mahony, & van Egeraat, 2021), create strong incentives for TDs to engage in constituency service (Martin, 2010).

To obtain information about the constituency's preferences is, nevertheless, costly and might necessitate research work and assistants. In this scenario, from a *supply side* perspective, interest group access to parliament can reduce these costs. Junk (2019) finds that legislators seeking input legitimacy tend to favour umbrella organisation, which have a large constituency. Of course, access granted by MPs might depend on an MP's circumstances, such as roles in committees. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine this in detail, our focus lies on the incentives for TDs and interest groups to interact.

From a demand side perspective, engagement with organisations with broad memberships and representing public interests should represent an opportunity for TDs to maintain and solidify constituency links. Further, post economic crash reforms introduced by the 31st and 32nd Dáil have weakened the executive's dominance over the Dáil giving more agenda-setting powers to TDs. Reforms have, for example, contracted the Taoiseach's control over the Dáil's agenda, reduced requirements for TDs to form a group and propose legislation, and have given TDs the instrument of pre-legislative scrutiny (Lynch, O'Malley, Reidy, Farrell, & Suiter, 2017). These reforms may have increased the attractiveness of TDs as lobbying targets and strengthened constituency ties. With this in mind, non-economic interest groups should have incentives to lobby TDs who, in turn, should be incentivised to provide these groups with frequent access.

H3 Parliament: Non-economic groups are more likely to have more frequent access to Dáil Éireann compared other groups.

Finally, lobbyists may target bureaucratic venues. This, however, might also include top-level civil servants within government departments (Binderkantz et al., 2015; MacCarthaigh, 2012). We therefore distinguish between government departments (discussed earlier) and regulatory agencies involved in policy implementation which lobbyists target.

These agencies support government departments by not only implementing legislation, but also monitoring enforcement, and providing technical information to decision-making bodies that seek to evaluate or amend legislation (Hardiman & Scott, 2012). The process of agencification – the creation of agencies which are delegated with policy responsibilities – is a common trend of new public management (NPM) reforms in developed governments.

The proliferation of agencies has meant a new target for interest groups. Stakeholder engagement with these institutions varies, from 'behind closed doors contact' to open consultation, including reliance on public consultation (Arras & Beyers, 2020). While Barbieri and Ongaro (2008) show that European agencies are not always comparable in terms of structure and autonomy to

national level agencies, it can be safely assumed that both *demand* technical, more than political, information. Consequently, economic interests and better-resourced organisations have an access advantage when seeking to influence them given their ability to *supply* technical information and knowledge (Pakull et al., 2020). These interest groups are also the more likely to be impacted by the work of agencies as their decisions tend to impact economic groups which are the objects of regulation, such as in the telecom, banking and electricity sectors. Similarly, when it comes to social policy, better endowed NGOs and charities that provide services will be more likely to seek access to agencies.

Access to agencies in Ireland is not expected to diverge from these general trends. The reform process of the Irish bureaucracy closely followed the NPM's trend of agencification, with a steady proliferation of agencies in the 1989–2010 period and a rapid growth of their policy responsibilities (MacCarthaigh, 2012). However, agencification in Ireland, as opposed to being the result of 'a deliberate process of developing a purchaser–provider split within the administrative system [...] can be understood as [...] means to facilitate social and interest groups in policy at national level' (MacCarthaigh, 2012, p. 38). Like in other lobbying venues, one would thus expect that the insider-outsider divide will determine patterns of access where economic interests and better-resourced organisations gain more frequent access to agencies.

H4 Agencies: Economic (and well-resourced) interests are more likely to have more frequent access to regulatory agencies compared other groups.

Finally, the importance of revolving doors is highlighted especially in countries like the US where 'personal contacts and knowledge of the government's inner working are central resources for a company, and the only way to employ these resources is by hiring lobbyists with direct experience of government' (Coen et al., 2021, p. 171). Strickland (2020) argues that so-called 'revolvers' tend to enjoy better access because of their unique, privileged position. This is why the phenomenon was regulated in lobbying acts in the US and Canada throughout the 1900s, and in many European jurisdictions throughout the 2000s (Chari, Hogan, Murphy, & Crepez, 2019; Murphy, 2017). Evidence suggests that this advantage does not depend on their ability to *supply* technical knowledge to policymakers who *demand* it per se. Rather it has more to do with revolvers' ability to 'get a foot in the door' precisely because of their previous contacts made in their former jobs (LaPira & Thomas, 2014).

The Irish experience is not dissimilar and sees instances of spinning doors between the public and private sectors. For example, in examining the failure of the central banking authority before the financial crisis, Chari and Bernhagen (2011) identify the revolving doors of officials moving between banks

and regulatory agencies. An event making the news after the crisis, in 2014, saw former Fine Gael (FG) adviser Frank Flannery lobbying the then Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn in relation to the activities of a charity of which Flannery was a former CEO. This episode reinforced the FG-Labour led government's position in favour of cooling-off periods (i.e. revolving door provisions) in the 2015 Regulation of Lobbying Act (Murphy, 2017).

In a systematic analysis of the revolving door phenomenon in Ireland, Baturo and Arlow (2018) find that 11 per cent of former TDs turn to lobbying jobs and a similar percentage is found in the civil service. Well-known cases are (also see Baturo & Arlow, 2018):

- former Attorney General of Ireland and EU Commissioner for Competition, Peter Sutherland, joining *AIB Bank, Goldman Sachs* and *BP*;
- former minister of state at the Department of Finance Tom Parlon joining the *Construction Industry Federation*;
- former Taoiseach John Burton joining *Europa Strategic Partners*;
- former MEP Brian Hayes becoming chief executive of the *Banking & Payments Federation Ireland*;
- the contested case of former EU Trade Commissioner, Phil Hogan, joining international law firm *DLA Piper*;
- and the former minister of state at the Department of Finance Michael D'Arcy leaving the Seanad for a chief executive position at the *Irish Association of Investment Managers*. Neither he, nor Hogan, notified the relevant ethics bodies prior to taking up their new position.

Given the prominence of revolvers in Ireland, it is not unreasonable to hypothesise that interest groups who employ them would expect to gain more frequent and consistent access across institutional venues.

H5 Elite integration: Revolvers are more likely to have more frequent access to all arenas (especially to government departments, the Dáil and regulatory agencies)

Data collection and sample

The problem associated with studying access in Ireland is the absence of data. The major challenge before this study is the collection of new data to provide an up-to-date understanding of access, transcending the present empirical gap.

The data used to investigate lobbying access to policymaking in this study were collected by an online survey of politically active groups Ireland. The contact details of 1,788 associations, firms and consultancies were retrieved from the publicly available information between 2017 and 2019 on the

Irish Register of Lobbying (henceforth, the Register), where politically active organisations must legally register since January 2016 (Murphy, 2017). In this regard, the Irish lobbying law is considered one of the most robust in Europe, and the Register provides a wealth of neatly organised information (Chari et al., 2019). Methodologically, the Register allows one to draw from a bigger sample than used in research predating 2016 (Dür & Mateo, 2010, 2016; Carpenter, 2015). This sample of almost 1,800 is therefore much closer to the entire interest-group population, compared to previous, much smaller samples of 401 organisations identified in *Administration Yearbook & Diary* by Dür and Mateo (2010) or the 512 organisations found in the *Institute of Public Administration Yearbook* identified by Carpenter (2015). A further improvement on these approaches, is the inclusion of firms and consultancies in the sample. Carpenter (2015) had already done so, but with a focus only on large firms. The inclusion of firms is an important advancement because they represent more than 30% of all organisations on the Register.

Using standard coding of interest group types found in the literature as a reference (Binderkrantz et al., 2015), the sample retrieved contains approximately 920 economic groups (that is, 800 business associations and firms and 120 professional associations & unions) 680 non-economic groups (non-governmental associations, identity and patient groups, think tanks) and 150 consultants (consultancy firms, law firms).

The survey was sent to each organisation's contact point for lobbying and advocacy. In some cases, the survey was sent to the contact address used for general enquiries (e.g. addresses beginning with 'info@'). In these cases, the email encouraged the recipient to forward the survey to the person responsible for public affairs in the organisation.

312 organisations completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 17%. This low response rate is not uncommon in interest group studies (Beyers et al., 2020) and we have no reason to believe that it invalidates our data collection effort. Moreover, it should be noted that in the interest group literature the response rate is relative to a sample of the often-unknown group population; in contrast, in this paper, we collect information on what should be close to the entire population given the legal requirement for lobbyists to register.

Unfortunately, little can be said about non-respondents, as data collection was anonymous and no information was registered about organisations not participating in the survey. Nevertheless, the distribution of respondents closely follows some features of the sample of registered organisations. In the economic groups' category, business associations and firms account for 38% of our respondents and are comparatively slightly underrepresented (where they represented approximately 45% in the sample). Professional associations and unions account for 12% (8.5% in the sample). Non-economic groups and consultants are slightly overrepresented making up 40%

(compared to 38% in the sample) and 9.5% (7% in the sample) respectively. These differences are negligible and pose no concern for bias.

One may contend that our survey was taken by more politically active organisations, compared to less active ones, and if this were the case this may undermine the generalisability of results. Fortunately, our group of respondents is representative of the registered lobbyist sample as far as policy area is concerned, which gives us reason to believe that it is also representative in terms of being politically active. In fact, according to the Register, most of the country's lobbying focuses on health care, followed by economic development and industry, agriculture, justice and equality, and education and training. Data from our survey closely follows this distribution, with four of these five policy areas identified as the policy areas of main activity. Finally, if the volume of resources available for lobbying in an organisation is a good indicator of political activity, then our data clearly accounts for less politically active organisations. Organisations with a small lobbying budget (measured as equal to or less than €10,000 a year or equal to or less than one full-time person responsible for public affairs) account for around 65% of our respondents. This skewed distribution in the availability of resources is not uncommon in lobbying research.

Variable operationalisation

The survey relied on a total of 40 questions concerning lobbying and organisational features of interest groups. In order to measure access to Irish policy-making, the survey collected information on the frequency in which these organisations 'engage in exchanges' not only with different policy stakeholders, but also in public consultations and through the publication of position papers.

We rely on four questions which best capture access to the policymaking arenas discussed previously. First, we ask organisations to indicate the frequency in which they engage with the media. Then we asked to indicate the frequency of access to government departments, that is ministers and their staff. To capture Dáil access we asked about engagement with Teachtaí Dála (TDs). Finally, we captured the frequency of each organisation's access to regulatory agencies. All questions are answered using an ordinal scale ranging from *never* (1), to *once or twice a year* (2), *once every two or three months* (3), *once or twice a month* (4), *weekly* (5). We use these questions to construct our four dependent variables that measure access to the venues.

To assess variation across group type in our analysis, we rely on a survey question which allowed organisations to self-identify as a business association, firm, consultancy/public affairs firm, labour union, professional association, research institute, NGO and citizen group. We then merge these in a variable taking five categories:

- business association,
- firm
- professional group (unions and professional associations),
- non-economic group (NGOs, citizen groups and think tanks) and
- consultant

Variation in organisational resources is measured considering two dimensions. First, using an indicator of complexity of an organisation's management structure. We asked respondents whether the organisation is structured around a board of directors, communication department, advocacy department, regional departments, secretariat and accountancy. This allowed for the construction of an additive index of organisational capacity as per Crepez and Hanegraaff (2020). This scores how many of the above factors concerning the organisation's management structure were present on a scale of 0–6. Secondly, structural resources are measured using a question capturing the organisation's total yearly budget allocated to lobbying in five answer categories: less than €10,000; between €10,000 and €100,000; between €100,000 and €500,000; between €500,000 and €1,000,000; and more than €1,000,000. These are then merged into three categories taking the labels of *low* (below €10,000), *medium* (€10,000 to €100,000) and *high* (more than €100,000).

To measure 'revolving doors', we focus on the extent to which the person responsible for the organisation's public affairs has previously occupied a public officeholder position (at national level, local level, or as special adviser). We merge these answers to construct a dichotomous variable taking the value of 1 if the organisation's public affairs person is a revolver and zero if otherwise.

Finally, to account for policy area in which organisations are politically active we asked respondents to identify their main area of activity using the 30 policy areas identified on the Register. We condensed these into 14 policy issues, namely: agriculture & food; culture & heritage; banking & finance; children & youth affairs; communication & transport; local policy; defence & marine; external policy; economic policy; social policy; energy; environment; justice & equality and sport & tourism.

Descriptive analysis of the data

Our data includes 43 business associations (representing 14.6% of all respondents), 72 firms (24.5%), 26 professional groups (8.8%), 119 non-economic groups (40.5%) and 34 consultants (11.5%).⁶ Figure 1 shows how these organisations are distributed by policy issue. Organisations active in the agricultural and food sector, for example, are predominantly business groups (73% are either business associations or firms). Unsurprisingly, business dominance is

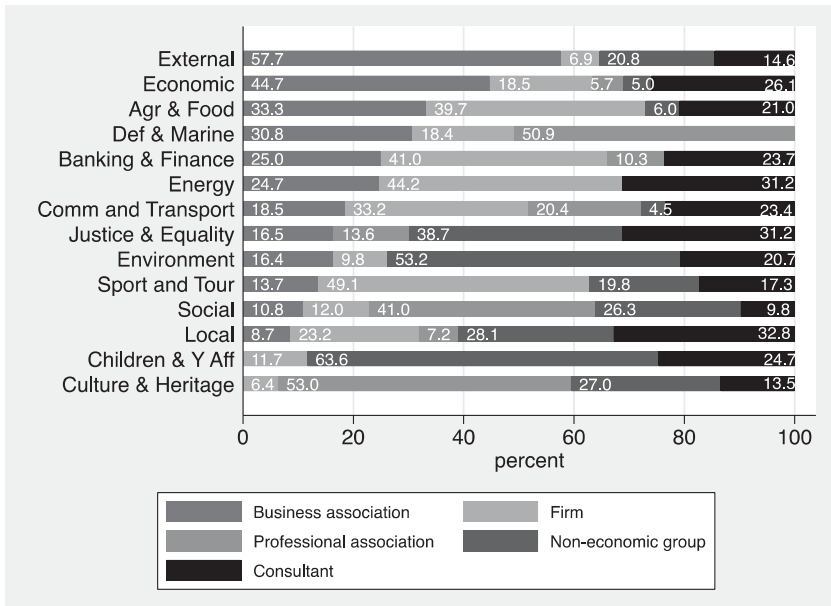
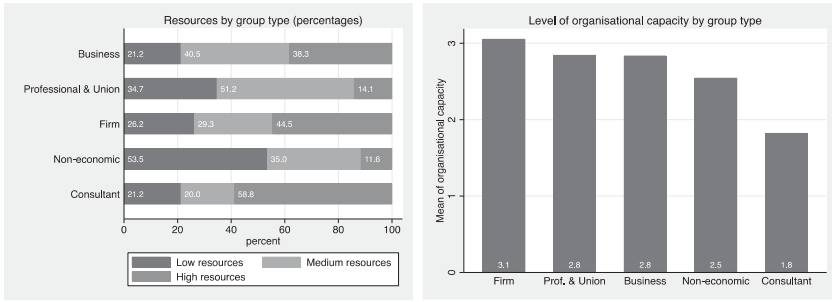


Figure 1. Percentage of organisations by group type for each of the 14 policy issues.

also found in the energy sector as well as in banking and finance. Professional groups dominate social policy, including health, housing and social protection. Non-economic groups, on the other hand, are found in relatively higher numbers in children & youth affairs, environment, and justice & equality. **Figure 1** indicates that while consultants are highly involved in energy and economic policy, they are active in a broad variety of policy issues, potentially having economic groups and non-economic groups as clients.

An important question in the literature concerns whether or not interest representation bias can be traced back to the resource advantage enjoyed by economic groups (in particular, business). It is therefore important to observe how group type and structural resources interact. **Figure 2** (left) shows that business associations, firms and professional groups have a clear resource advantage compared to non-economic groups regarding budgets for lobbying. The comparison between non-economic and economic groups is paramount here: on average, 32.3% of economic groups spend more than €100,000/year on lobbying, compared to only 11.6% for non-economic groups. 27.4% of economic groups allocate only €10,000 or less to lobbying, while this percentage is much higher for non-economic groups (53.5%). The resource advantage of economic interests is also evident when organisational resources are considered in **Figure 2** (right). Our index of organisational capacity indicates that firms, business associations and professional groups, having a more complex and professionalised management



Note: Level of organisational capacity (right) measured on a scale from 0 to 6, where closer to 6 represents higher capacity.

Figure 2. Resources by group type (structural resources left; organisational capacity right). Note: Level of organisational capacity (right) measured on a scale from 0 to 6, where closer to 6 represents higher capacity.

structure, have the capacity to empower political action if needed, while this is more complicated for non-economic groups.⁷

Finally, we explore the concentration of revolving door lobbyists in different organisations (Figure 3). The US literature suggests that revolvers are predominantly hired as consultants. This is similarly reflected in our data, where 26% of public affairs consultants hire revolving door lobbyists. This percentage is only slightly lower for business associations (23%), but

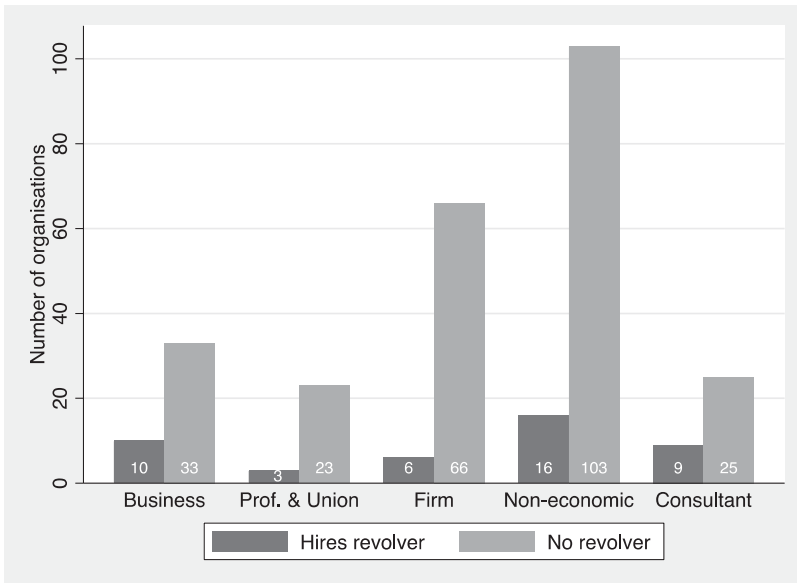


Figure 3. Revolving door by group type.

much lower for firms (8%), professional groups (12%) and non-economic groups (13%): this shows that there is a business advantage when comparing these group types, but such difference only holds for associations and not corporate actors.

The next section explores the frequency of access to key venues.

Analysis of interest group access to policymaking arenas in Ireland

Figure 4 offers a visual summary of our four dependent variables: in line with existing research, our data shows that access to key arenas of policymaking varies substantially. Access to the media, which we treat as a non-institutional arena that lobbyists use to gain visibility, mobilise public opinion and to send signals to policymakers, varies substantially. Here we see almost 30% of respondents never accessing this venue, while more than 20% access it at least ‘on a monthly basis’. Access to government departments and the Dáil is more concentrated, with the large majority of organisations accessing these arenas between once and six times yearly. Access to agencies reaches much lower levels, perhaps because of the technical information needed to lobby these institutions or the tendency of agencies to engage in stakeholder engagement with only a handful of interest groups. Almost 50% of the organisations do not access this arena.

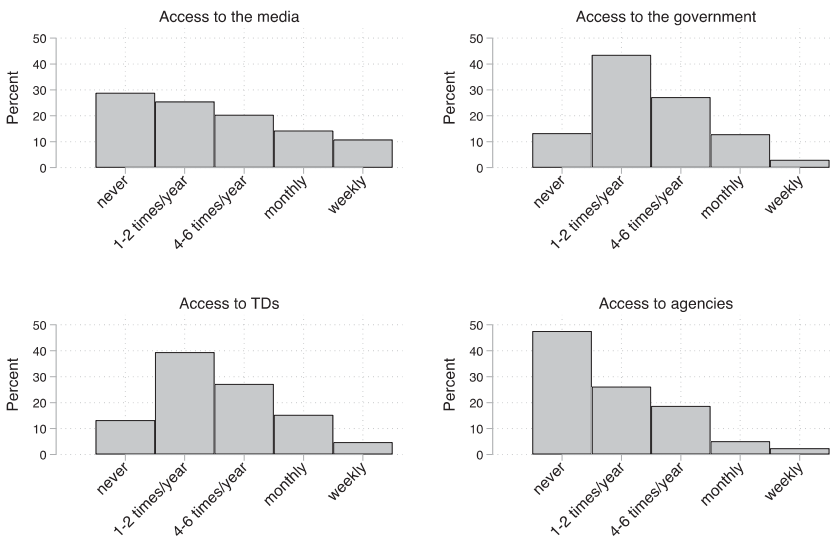


Figure 4. Frequency of yearly access to four venues of policymaking.

We then question: with which frequency do those organisations that are economic and well-endowed, with superior ability to produce technical information, access these venues? We test this and the other expectations using multivariate analysis.

Table 1 shows the results of ordered logit regressions, which best fit the nature of our dependent variables. We model our independent variables, *group type*, *organisational capacity* and *structural resources*, and *revolving door lobbyists* to explain access to the four arenas of policymaking. We run the analyses adding group type first, followed by our indicators of resource capacity and finally the ability to hire a revolver. To account for heteroskedasticity in the residuals, we cluster standard errors by policy issue. Table 1 shows the result with three regressions for each dependent variable. Results are consistent across model specification and the full models explain between 8 and 14 per cent of the variation in the data indicating that the observed organisational characteristics are important drivers of access.

First, we test the expectation that economic and well-resourced groups have better access to the media (H1). The results of Models 1–3 in Table 1 clearly support this expectation as far as resources are concerned. Both lobbying resources and organisational capacity are positively associated with more frequent media access. Medium to high-resourced organisations have between two- to four times higher chances to secure more frequent access than less resourced ones (based on Model 3). Nevertheless, business associations, professional groups and firms do not seem to have an access advantage compared to other non-economic groups. On the contrary, and in line with past research on corporate lobbying in the media (Mitchell et al., 1997), firms seem to shy away from this arena. This indicates that firms are less active on this front and may delegate such activity to either business associations of which they are members, or consultancies they hire. We therefore confirm H1 only partially.

Models 4–6 in Table 1 show the results for the government arena and are consistent with findings regarding the media. Once again, resources seem to ‘buy’ more frequent access to government departments, but no difference is found between economic and non-economic groups. In addition, firms seem to be less frequent visitors of this venue (up to 70% less likely than non-economic groups). This finding is interestingly inconsistent with accounts of lobbying in west European democracies and the EU, where business actors are found to dominate access and of which corporations represent an increasing portion (Berkhout et al., 2018; Beyers, 2004; Bouwen, 2004; Eising, 2007).

Models 7–12 test H3 and H4. According to H3, non-economic groups were expected to access the Dáil more frequently than other groups for two reasons. First, because they carry political information (as opposed to technical information), which TDs (taking a demand-side perspective) are interested in. This is for reasons linked to input legitimacy and electoral incentives.

Table 1. – Results of ordered logistic regressions estimating probability of access to four arenas of policymaking.

VARIABLES	(1) Media Access	(2) Media Access	(3) Media Access	(4) Gov. Dep. Access	(5) Gov. Dep. Access	(6) Gov. Dep. Access	(7) Dáil Access	(8) Dáil Access	(9) Dáil Access	(10) Agency Access	(11) Agency Access	(12) Agency Access
<i>Group type</i> (Ref: Non-Economic groups)												
Business associations	0.380 (0.446)	0.118 (0.456)	0.046 (0.473)	0.582 (0.388)	0.340 (0.306)	0.236 (0.287)	0.456 (0.377)	0.209 (0.421)	0.157 (0.443)	1.164*** (0.429)	0.901** (0.406)	0.835** (0.353)
Prof. & Unions	0.129 (0.271)	-0.025 (0.344)	0.003 (0.339)	0.027 (0.377)	-0.168 (0.457)	-0.275 (0.388)	-0.077 (0.286)	-0.516 (0.384)	-0.596* (0.323)	0.205 (0.261)	-0.004 (0.271)	-0.104 (0.304)
Firms	-0.902*** (0.296)	-1.388*** (0.312)	-1.403*** (0.329)	-0.518 (0.341)	-1.143** (0.463)	-1.186*** (0.453)	-0.915*** (0.303)	-1.535*** (0.421)	-1.563*** (0.419)	0.216 (0.294)	-0.150 (0.336)	-0.159 (0.358)
Consultants	0.263 (0.326)	0.292 (0.412)	0.140 (0.390)	0.693* (0.378)	0.656 (0.490)	0.525 (0.481)	0.682** (0.339)	0.746 (0.463)	0.667 (0.491)	0.784** (0.316)	0.610 (0.453)	0.620 (0.448)
<i>Lobby resources</i> (ref: low)												
Medium		0.794*** (0.194)	0.823*** (0.208)		0.920*** (0.205)	0.753*** (0.204)		1.215*** (0.208)	1.023*** (0.215)		0.844*** (0.286)	0.841*** (0.266)
High		1.510*** (0.446)	1.418*** (0.482)		2.366*** (0.607)	2.271*** (0.645)		2.285*** (0.344)	2.179*** (0.353)		1.615*** (0.527)	1.667*** (0.471)
Organisational capacity		0.342*** (0.067)	0.331*** (0.063)		0.306*** (0.113)	0.325*** (0.105)		0.281*** (0.093)	0.305*** (0.084)		0.202** (0.082)	0.216** (0.085)
Revolver			0.554* (0.304)			0.811*** (0.230)			0.702** (0.285)			0.150 (0.343)
/cut1	-1.052*** (0.207)	-0.175 (0.265)	-0.153 (0.244)	-1.849*** (0.356)	-1.163*** (0.389)	-1.138*** (0.329)	-2.043*** (0.240)	-1.403*** (0.281)	-1.333*** (0.245)	0.276 (0.238)	0.940*** (0.284)	0.927*** (0.282)

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

VARIABLES	(1) Media Access	(2) Media Access	(3) Media Access	(4) Gov. Dep. Access	(5) Gov. Dep. Access	(6) Gov. Dep. Access	(7) Dáil Access	(8) Dáil Access	(9) Dáil Access	(10) Agency Access	(11) Agency Access	(12) Agency Access
/cut2	0.092 (0.231)	1.183*** (0.309)	1.166*** (0.311)	0.330 (0.257)	1.342*** (0.358)	1.424*** (0.313)	0.034 (0.246)	1.007*** (0.276)	1.097*** (0.268)	1.406*** (0.256)	2.246*** (0.287)	2.276*** (0.311)
/cut3	1.001*** (0.224)	2.286*** (0.320)	2.309*** (0.328)	1.745*** (0.217)	3.108*** (0.368)	3.224*** (0.328)	1.316*** (0.206)	2.657*** (0.387)	2.794*** (0.387)	2.893*** (0.372)	3.939*** (0.349)	3.977*** (0.405)
/cut4	2.085*** (0.181)	3.468*** (0.361)	3.499*** (0.386)	3.637*** (0.398)	5.393*** (0.515)	5.467*** (0.461)	3.014*** (0.406)	4.776*** (0.644)	4.845*** (0.648)	4.193*** (0.317)	5.202*** (0.190)	5.248*** (0.202)
Observations	312	303	294	312	303	294	312	303	294	312	303	294
Chi-Sq.	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Pseudo R-Sq.	0.02	0.09	0.09	0.02	0.12	0.13	0.03	0.13	0.14	0.02	0.08	0.08

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$; Clustered standard errors by 14 policy areas: agriculture & food; culture & heritage; banking & finance; children & youth affairs; communication & transport; local policy; defence & marine; external policy; economic policy; social policy; energy; environment; justice & equality; and sport & tourism.

Secondly, because STV creates strong ties between TDs and their constituency, representatives are more likely to listen to organisations such as NGOs and charity groups that share constituency interests.

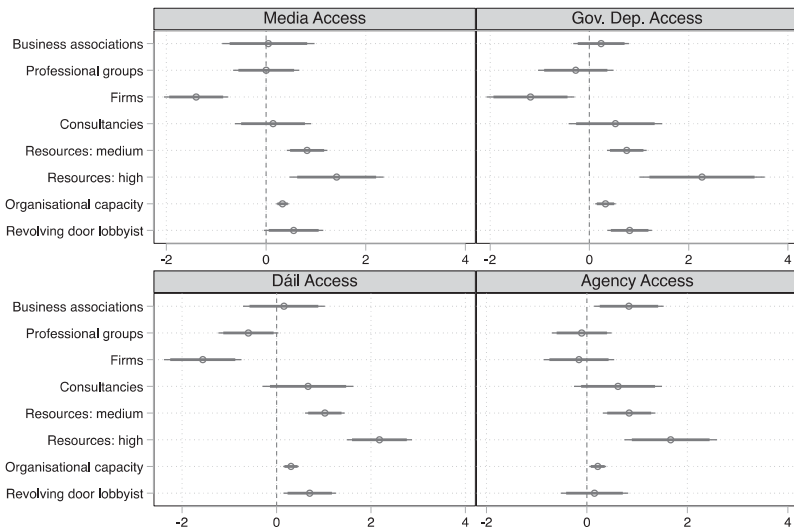
We find that this is not the case and H3 is rejected. Consistent with other findings in relation to other arenas, well-resourced organisations register more frequent access to TDs when controlling for other factors such as group type. Arguments found in literature on legislative lobbying may therefore not apply to Dáil access. On the contrary, the increased power of the Dáil *vis-a-vis* the government may have made this a more competitive lobbying arena. This would be consistent with studies on lobbying in the European Parliament (EP) (Rasmussen, 2015). The EP was initially seen as a venue for NGOs, but has increasingly become an arena for professional and business interests as its legislative powers increased *vis-à-vis* other EU institutions.

Next, some evidence in support of H4 is found in Models 10–12. In line with our expectations, business associations declare more frequent lobbying access to agencies when compared to non-economic groups. They are twice as likely to visit this arena compared to non-economic groups. Nevertheless, this finding does not hold for firms and professional groups and its applicability to the category of economic groups should therefore be made with caution.

Most importantly, higher financial and organisational capacity in public affairs is consistently and positively associated with frequent access to agencies. As formulated in H4, this may be because organisational capacity and lobbying budgets allow organisations to spend more resources in research work and production of technical information that is valuable to agencies. An alternative explanation may lie on the demand side of the lobbying exchange (See also Appendix 1). Agencies, often rely on advisory bodies and committees as modes of interaction with interest groups. They may allocate access to established and reputable organisations, with better capacity and resources for advocacy work. This logic of seat allocation to advisory bodies of regulatory agencies has been noted by Fraussen, Beyers, and Donas (2015) in Belgium, by Binderkrantz et al. (2015) in Denmark and by Rasmussen and Gross (2015) in the European Commission. There is also some evidence in Ireland that organisations with membership in advisory bodies tend to be established players. For example, Fáilte Ireland's Brexit Advisory Group is formed by the tourism industry's key players such as Tourism Ireland, the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation and the Irish Hotel Federation. Similarly, SIPO's Advisory Group on the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 sees established interest groups. On the one hand, Ibec, the Irish Farmers' Association, and Chambers Ireland represent economic groups, while The Wheel, ICTR and the Irish Cancer Society represent charities.⁸ Finally, in Tusla we see representatives of the main social workers' professional associations, Social Care Ireland and the Irish Social Workers' Association. Tusla's Research Advisory

Group has amongst its members EPIC, a well-established charity working to empower people in care.

Taking all four arenas together, higher levels of structural resources and organisational capacity were consistently associated with higher probability of frequent access to arenas of policymaking (see [Figure 5](#)). From a supply side perspective, larger lobbying budgets allow organisations to plan better campaigns, produce better information, or hire specialised personnel. This increases their chances of gaining access to policymaking venues whether these are controlled by journalists, ministers, TDs or civil servants. As [Table A1⁹](#) and [Figure A1](#) (which show the effect of an interaction between group type and resources) in [Appendix 1](#) demonstrate, this finding is consistent across all group types.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the reasons for this may be different. For example, in the case of access to the media, this may be because organisations have the possibility to invest more in political communication. In the case of access to government departments, better access may come from the ability to invest more in research and produce better technical information which offers more access opportunities. The positive effect of resources on access is confirmed also when organisational resources are considered. As [Figure 5](#) shows, higher organisational capacity is consistently associated with more frequent access. The substantive effect



Note: Unstandardized coefficients and 90-95% confidence intervals of the explanatory variables based on Models 3, 6, 9 and 12 in [Table 1](#)

Figure 5. Drivers of access (based on [Table 1](#)). Note: Unstandardized coefficients and 90-95% confidence intervals of the explanatory variables based on Models 3, 6, 9 and 12 in [Table 1](#).

is, however, smaller compared to lobbying budgets, indicating that the latter better capture resource advantages in lobbying.

It is important to note that one overall finding clashes with observations found in most European political systems. In our data, economic actors, especially business groups, do not appear to dominate access.¹¹ This is surprising considering that most European and EU interest group research finds a business bias in lobbying. Access to Irish arenas seems to be more equally distributed with only firms registering below-average access frequency.

One may be circumspect in this finding because access does not equal influence. While business actors meet policymakers and journalists as often as other group types, they may be more successful in influencing their choices. Our preliminary finding, which uses influence measured through a survey item capturing self-assessed perceived success in lobbying, suggests that is not the case. Appendix 2 shows that business actors are not found to be more successful in lobbying than other actors, at least as far as their perceived influence is concerned. This finding is of course preliminary and needs further investigation. However, a wealth of research already shows that perceived influence is a valid and reliable proxy of actual influence in lobbying (especially if combined with other indicators) (Mahoney, 2008; Stevens & De Bruycker, 2020). Our finding on the absence of a business bias in Irish lobbying may therefore be plausible and not far removed from recent accounts of business lobbying, described as 'abundant, yet unsuccessful' at least in terms of frequency/probability (Coen et al., 2021; Dür, Bernhagen, & Marshall, 2015; Joosen, 2022).¹²

Finally, H5 hypothesised that human resources matter for lobbying access. We specifically hypothesised that revolving door lobbyists would allow organisations to obtain frequent access to venues because of their political and information capital. Overall, Models 1–12 and Figure 5 seem to confirm our expectation. This is especially the case for the arenas of government departments and the Dáil. Here the difference between organisations hiring revolving door lobbyists and other organisations is remarkable, with 'revolvers' being twice as likely to secure access to the government or the parliament compared to their colleagues without public office experience.

This might indicate that the advantage of hiring a revolving door lobbyist lies in his/her political capital, namely the ability to gain a 'foot in the door' through access to a broad network of policy stakeholders including elected representatives and journalists (LaPira & Thomas, 2014). This seems to be less relevant for civil servants in regulatory agencies, who – having to rely more on interest groups for technical information – find it less useful to listen to revolving door lobbyists compared to other lobbyists. The many episodes of revolving doors reported in Irish politics are therefore relevant because they can provide lobbying advantages for organisations who hire revolvers introducing bias in access. This justifies why statutory cooling off

periods exist in Ireland. The question is whether their criticised length of only one year is sufficient to level the playing field for lobbying access.

Conclusions

Overall, interest group access to policymaking in Ireland shares similarities with other political systems in Europe, but also differs from them. In line with other studies investigating lobbying in Europe and the EU, resources seem to matter for access to almost all venues of policymaking (Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Rasmussen & Gross, 2015). Regardless of whether organisational or structural resources are measured by lobbying budgets or as public affairs staff (see Table A3 in Appendix for robustness check), better-endowed organisations are more likely to gain frequent access. This is also confirmed in Ireland. This most likely depends on supply-side mechanisms, by which organisations with more resources can employ these in a variety of political activities which then buy them frequent access. Similar to Flöthe (2019a), we point towards the association between resources and information provision. This is, from a resource exchange point of view, a crucial commodity to obtain access. That said, there may be also demand side explanations. This relates to the tendency of gatekeepers to bring in established players with a track record of advocacy work (Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Fraussen et al., 2015; Rasmussen & Gross, 2015)

The significance of resources for access holds across group types. In fact, Irish policymaking is not biased in favour of economic interests. This is opposed to what is observed in studies of access in Europe and the EU (Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Mahoney, 2008). Ireland sees business associations, professional associations, and consultancies (also) representing economic interests having the same chances of accessing policymaking venues as other groups. Moreover, firms are significantly less likely to access political arenas compared to any other group type. There are two possible explanations for this. First, given the relatively concentrated business sector in Ireland, with one business association (Ibec) representing approximately 70% of the business interests, it might be that firms prefer to delegate lobbying to the business association of which they are members. Secondly, as firm lobbying is not professionalised in Ireland, it may be that firms themselves pursue political activities only occasionally because a select few have developed well-structured government relations departments.

Notably, non-economic groups do not seem to be disadvantaged compared to other organisations in terms of access to policymaking. Given the relatively low level of resources for this interest group category in our data, we interpret this finding taking a demand-side perspective: gatekeepers (journalists, TDs and Ministers) have incentives to provide access to these groups in the decision-making process and public debate.

Finally, we provide the first insight in Ireland, of which there is still rare evidence in the European context, that organisations hiring revolving door lobbyists are associated with more frequent access to policymaking. While this is reflected in studies from the US, we build on recent studies on this topic in Ireland and Europe (Baturó & Arlow, 2018) to show that trends of elite integration are likely to have an impact on the policymaking process.

These results offer a snapshot of patterns of interest group access to policymaking in a so-far understudied European state. In so doing, we update Dür and Mateo's (2010, 2016) and Carpenter's (2015) work on access, while complementing past accounts which focus on case studies or descriptive analyses of the Irish interest group system (Adshead, 1996, 2011; Morrissey, 1986; Murphy, 2010). We also speak to recent scholarship (Huwlyer & Martin, 2021) that has started to investigate the effect of lobbying on legislative activity in the Dáil.

It is important to stress that access does not equal influence. If the openness of Irish policymaking for different group types seen here is certainly good news for scholars who embrace participation in politics, it might still be that specific groups or organisations disproportionately influence specific policy outputs. With this in mind, future research on lobbying in Ireland could explore interest group influence on public policy more systematically, adding to the growing evidence that business dominance in access does not always translate into influence (Dür et al., 2015; Coen et al., 2021). Even studies of access in the Irish context could be improved, with a focus on fleshing out the causal mechanisms we are not able to explain here. As Huwlyer and Martin (2021) and Crepaz (2020) have recently pointed out, the availability of information on lobbying on the Irish Register of Lobbying is an important resource that more scholars could use in these future endeavours.

Notes

1. This reflects the behavioural definition of interest groups, which includes all *organisations* which have a *political interest*, but do *not seek office* (Baroni et al., 2014).
2. Numbers are based on data in the Irish Register of Lobbyists, www.lobbying.ie.
3. These include Denmark, the UK, the Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Italy, Germany and Switzerland.
4. For example, their analysis showed that national associations carry out most of the lobbying activity on EU legislation.
5. Access to the media is also commonly sought by consultancies, which predominantly represent the interests of business groups and firms. They target the media when seeking to build trust for their clients, and when client organisations are recently established or are uncertain about advocacy strategies (Vesa & Karimo, 2019; Huwlyer, 2020).

6. Includes only organisations for which there is no missing data.
7. Consultants rate low on the organisational complexity scale. This is because many PR firms can be quite small with only a handful of staff. However, their specialisation in public affairs and lobbying is evident in [Figure 2](#) (left).
8. For more information see: <https://www.lobbying.ie/about-us/advisory-group/>
9. For ease of interpretation, we rely on linear estimation. Results replicate almost perfectly using ordered logistic regression.
10. Although there is some overlap between low and highly resourced organisations as far as agency access is concerned. This may indicate that agency access is influenced by demand-side factors, where interest groups are pulled into the process by civil servants.
11. We acknowledge that this finding may be driven by the low number of organisations in the business association category (= 43). When aggregated into an *economic group* category with professional groups we still do not find a consistent difference between economic and non-economic groups in access.
12. Business actors may still win the most important lobbying battles.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix to Interest Group Access to Policymaking in Ireland

Appendix 1

Table A1. Robustness: Interaction effects between group type and resources testing H2 to H4 further (resources treated as continuous).

VARIABLES	(1) Media	(2) Media	(3) Gov Dep.	(4) Gov Dep.	(5) Dáil	(6) Dáil	(7) Agency	(8) Agency
<i>Group type</i> (Ref: Non-Economic groups)								
Business associations	0.225 (0.481)	0.115 (0.527)	0.268 (0.388)	0.105 (0.348)	0.233 (0.337)	0.068 (0.354)	0.409 (0.539)	0.357 (0.578)
Prof. & Unions	0.485 (0.564)	0.279 (0.595)	1.033** (0.406)	1.012*** (0.307)	-0.019 (0.397)	-0.129 (0.384)	0.604 (0.730)	0.641 (0.617)
Firms	-0.168 (0.387)	-0.405 (0.392)	0.146 (0.278)	-0.071 (0.242)	-0.020 (0.171)	-0.262 (0.215)	-0.088 (0.338)	-0.200 (0.317)
Consultants	1.157* (0.587)	1.070* (0.563)	0.797** (0.358)	0.582 (0.409)	0.371 (0.512)	0.125 (0.558)	0.697* (0.391)	0.512 (0.378)
Resources (Continuous)	1.168*** (0.160)	0.787*** (0.232)	1.032*** (0.127)	0.717*** (0.155)	0.980*** (0.124)	0.633*** (0.118)	0.677** (0.268)	0.490 (0.302)
<i>Interaction</i> (Ref: Non-Economic groups # resources)								
Business associations # resources	-0.225 (0.217)	-0.135 (0.261)	-0.186 (0.214)	-0.070 (0.208)	-0.181 (0.177)	-0.047 (0.181)	-0.007 (0.392)	0.028 (0.425)
Prof. & Unions # resources	-0.415 (0.275)	-0.229 (0.295)	-0.883** (0.362)	-0.902*** (0.241)	-0.161 (0.250)	-0.096 (0.201)	-0.476 (0.523)	-0.529 (0.425)
Firms # resources	-0.489* (0.242)	-0.321 (0.254)	-0.472** (0.189)	-0.319* (0.166)	-0.504*** (0.157)	-0.327* (0.162)	-0.000 (0.275)	0.081 (0.265)
Consultants # resources	-0.838*** (0.273)	-0.676** (0.259)	-0.481** (0.184)	-0.262 (0.227)	-0.175 (0.241)	0.097 (0.269)	-0.367 (0.274)	-0.162 (0.279)
Org. capacity		0.190*** (0.047)		0.130*** (0.043)		0.140*** (0.032)		0.099** (0.039)
Revolver		0.382* (0.183)		0.369*** (0.107)		0.312** (0.135)		0.143 (0.186)

(Continued)

Table A1. Continued.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
VARIABLES	Media	Media	Gov Dep.	Gov Dep.	Dáil	Dáil	Agency	Agency
Constant	0.144 (0.269)	0.0940 (0.272)	0.189 (0.160)	0.216 (0.143)	0.414** (0.150)	0.454** (0.160)	-0.135 (0.271)	-0.154 (0.275)
Observations	303	294	303	294	303	294	303	294
R-squared	0.211	0.261	0.285	0.328	0.312	0.345	0.186	0.212

Note: The models employ linear prediction (OLS) for ease of interpretation. Results are robust when compared to ordered logistic regression.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$; Clustered standard errors by 14 policy areas: agriculture & food; culture & heritage; banking & finance; children & youth affairs; communication & transport; local policy; defence & marine; external policy; economic policy; social policy; energy; environment; justice & equality; and sport & tourism.

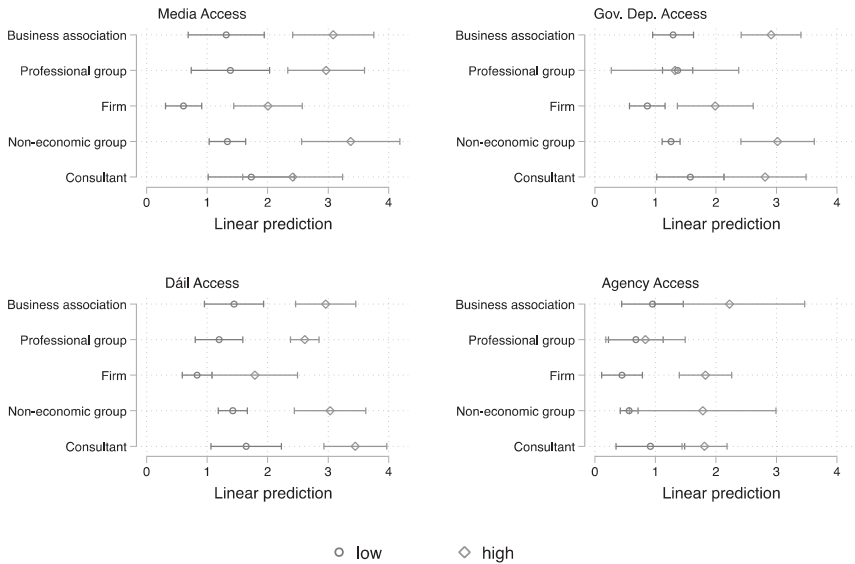


Figure A1. Robustness: Predicted effect of group type on frequency of access to four venues of policymaking moderated by levels of resources. Note: only values for low and high levels of resources are displayed for ease of comparison. Based on Models 2, 4, 6 and 8 in Table A1.

Appendix 2

Table A2. Robustness: Effects of organisational type, resources and revolver on perceived lobbying success (OLS, with clustered standard errors by policy area).

VARIABLES	(1) Lobbying Success	(2) Lobbying Success	(3) Lobbying Success
<i>Group type (Ref: Non-Economic groups)</i>			
Business associations	0.748 (0.549)	0.269 (0.495)	0.197 (0.511)
Prof. & Unions	0.012 (0.212)	-0.117 (0.211)	-0.246 (0.249)
Firms	-0.164 (0.275)	-0.554* (0.271)	-0.532* (0.286)
Consultants	0.923** (0.370)	0.602 (0.406)	0.430 (0.438)
<i>Lobby resources (ref: low)</i>			
Medium		1.322*** (0.291)	1.280*** (0.311)
High		1.788*** (0.360)	1.740*** (0.395)
<i>Organisational capacity</i>			
		0.287*** (0.091)	0.263** (0.091)
<i>Revolver</i>			
			0.559** (0.187)

(Continued)

Table A2. Continued.

VARIABLES	(1) Lobbying Success	(2) Lobbying Success	(3) Lobbying Success
Constant	4.888*** (0.262)	3.864*** (0.401)	3.894*** (0.396)
Observations	312	303	294
R-squared	0.027	0.194	0.189

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$; Clustered standard errors by 14 policy areas: agriculture & food; culture & heritage; banking & finance; children & youth affairs; communication & transport; local policy; defence & marine; external policy; economic policy; social policy; energy; environment; justice & equality; and sport & tourism.

Appendix 3

Table A3. Robustness: Replication using the number of FTE public affairs staff as proxy for structural resources (Ordered Logit).

VARIABLES	(1) Media	(2) Gov. Dep.	(3) Dáil	(4) Agency
<i>Group type</i> (Ref: Non-Economic groups)				
Business associations	0.103 (0.450)	0.428 (0.314)	0.291 (0.357)	0.990*** (0.305)
Prof. & Unions	0.119 (0.308)	-0.188 (0.355)	-0.372 (0.257)	0.060 (0.300)
Firms	-1.221*** (0.336)	-0.821** (0.387)	-1.232*** (0.351)	0.108 (0.346)
Consultants	0.0949 (0.421)	0.746* (0.446)	0.820* (0.472)	0.770** (0.320)
PA staff (0 - <10)	0.482*** (0.128)	0.292** (0.147)	0.245** (0.107)	0.369*** (0.124)
Org. capacity	0.366*** (0.064)	0.431*** (0.088)	0.420*** (0.102)	0.297*** (0.074)
Revolver	0.550** (0.253)	0.888*** (0.262)	0.776*** (0.267)	0.121 (0.349)
/cut1	0.304* (0.170)	-0.610* (0.317)	-0.846*** (0.201)	1.406*** (0.248)
/cut2	1.621*** (0.228)	1.906*** (0.284)	1.460*** (0.260)	2.711*** (0.299)
/cut3	2.742*** (0.234)	3.587*** (0.258)	3.004*** (0.336)	4.341*** (0.440)
/cut4	3.997*** (0.289)	5.648*** (0.404)	4.837*** (0.498)	5.690*** (0.308)
Observations	301	301	301	301
R-squared	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.07

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$; Clustered standard errors by 14 policy areas: agriculture & food; culture & heritage; banking & finance; children & youth affairs; communication & transport; local policy; defence & marine; external policy; economic policy; social policy; energy; environment; justice & equality; and sport & tourism.