

# The Real Effects of Administrative Disclosure on Cross-Border Trade\*

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## Abstract

This study examines the real effects of government disclosure of aggregated administrative data on international trade. In April 2015, China began publicly disclosing the names of firms awarded the top tax compliance rating, which is derived from detailed administrative records capturing firms' regulatory compliance, transactional reliability, and financial record-keeping quality. We posit that the disclosure provides a credible and easily accessible signal of firms' contractual risk to foreign business partners. Using transaction-level export data, we find that firms with a top rating relatively increase exports by 7.4% following the disclosure, with stronger effects at the extensive margin. Consistent with an information friction channel, the effect is stronger among private firms, when perceived financial reporting quality is low, and where buyer-exporter communication is limited. Furthermore, we show that the disclosure improves trade efficiency, as reflected in reduced relationship disruption risk and improved operational performance among customers. Overall, our findings demonstrate that government-administered disclosure complements financial reporting in alleviating information frictions that hinder cross-border trade.

Keywords: Disclosure, Administrative Data, Export, Information Friction  
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## 1. Introduction

Information asymmetry is a key obstacle to cross-border trade, as foreign buyers lack credible information about exporters' quality and reliability (Rauch 1999; Chaney 2018). This challenge is heightened by recent global supply chain disruptions from the pandemic and geopolitical tensions (WTO 2016; Alfaro, Brussevich, Minoiu, and Presbitero 2025). While financial disclosures can potentially mitigate such frictions, their effect is limited since most private exporters lack public financial reports or credible disclosures (Minnis 2011). Moreover, preparing and auditing financial statements is costly, particularly for small exporters, potentially exacerbating their disadvantages in accessing global markets (Breuer 2021; Bernard, Kaya, and Wertz 2021; Glaeser and Omartian 2022). In this study, we assess the plausibility of an alternative policy instrument, the disclosure of government-managed administrative data, in alleviating information frictions in international trade.

Governments routinely collect extensive administrative data through business registrations, tax filings, and inspections that can assess firms' business transactions, regulatory compliance, and financial record-keeping. Although gathered for enforcement, such data could generate valuable informational spillovers if disclosed publicly. In fact, exporters frequently highlight government-recognized tax compliance on business-to-business platforms that connect domestic exporters with foreign buyers.<sup>1</sup> Against this backdrop, we examine whether disclosing government-assessed taxpayer compliance ratings, derived from administrative data, can alleviate information frictions in international trade. Specifically, we exploit the 2015 nationwide disclosure of compliant taxpayers in China as a quasi-natural experiment to examine its impact on export performance.

In April 2015, the State Taxation Administration (STA) publicly disclosed the names of firms receiving the top ("A-type") tax compliance rating on a centralized online platform.

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<sup>1</sup> We provide further details and examples in Section A.1 of the Online Appendix.

The assessment of tax compliance aggregates over 90 quantitative indicators spanning tax filings, bookkeeping, audit cooperation, and consistency of records with third-party data.<sup>2</sup> This nationwide centralized disclosure improves the visibility and accessibility of tax-compliance information. Two important features help us isolate the effect of centralized public disclosure from administrative benefits potentially conferred on taxpayers. First, prior to this reform, local tax authorities operated their own honor roll systems. Top-rated firms, therefore, have enjoyed local government-conferred privileges before the disclosures. Second, the nationwide incentive framework granting A-type taxpayers administrative privileges was introduced only toward the end of our sample period, alleviating any confounding effects of these benefits.

We argue that nationwide disclosure of top-rated taxpayers complements private due diligence in cross-border trade. First, under a value-added tax (VAT) system (as in China), compliance requirements generate a verifiable paper trail of transactions (Pomeranz 2015), thereby tightly linking tax compliance with business integrity. Second, the STA's compliance assessments extend beyond taxes to recordkeeping, reporting accuracy, and regulatory conduct. Therefore, analogous to financial statements providing financial information assured by audit firms, the "A-type" designation signals operational legitimacy and financial reliability assured by the government, signifying that firms have the capacity to fulfill contractual obligations. Consistent with this view, advisors on China-facing cross-border transactions recommend using the rating as a screening tool and triangulating credibility, especially in the absence of credible financial statements (CJO Global 2022; GWBMA 2025).

By providing an accessible government-assured signal of firms' contractual performance risk, the disclosure alleviates information frictions and lowers the search costs for foreign

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<sup>2</sup> Based on our conversations with STA officials, the system is managed at the national level, and all processing is conducted within a centrally maintained electronic system, leaving minimal scope for local discretion.

buyers screening exporters.<sup>3</sup> This enables top-rated firms to secure new foreign customers (Grossman and Helpman 2005). Moreover, annual rating updates lower post-contract monitoring costs by providing timely information about contractual risk, promoting transactions at the intensive margin. Both mechanisms predict increased exports by top-rated taxpayers following the disclosure. Supporting this argument, Yuanhe Fine Chemicals credits its “A-type” taxpayer designation as a “golden business card” that enabled expansion into 21 countries, partnerships with over 100 foreign customers, and nearly doubled export contracts. Quectel, a Chinese telecom firm, notes that the designation boosts credibility in winning large foreign bids and business.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, government-issued recognition may be perceived by foreign buyers as indicative of heightened governmental oversight and heavily documented contractual processes. The combination of elevated compliance costs and reduced contractual flexibility might increase transaction costs and thus deter foreign buyers from transacting with top-rated firms (Armstrong, Glaeser, and Hoopes 2025). Moreover, the effectiveness of the disclosure may be undermined by distrust in government-administered evaluation systems, particularly in cross-border contexts where institutional trust varies (e.g., Nannestad 2008; Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2009). Furthermore, to avoid revealing proprietary information, the disclosed information is highly aggregated and conveys only a coarse signal of “A-type” designation, potentially limiting its informational value for trade decisions. Therefore, the disclosure may not or even adversely affect the exports of top-rated firms.

To empirically test these competing predictions, we construct a firm–destination–year

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<sup>3</sup> While exporters could exchange rating information privately with foreign buyers, public disclosure conveys incremental information beyond private exchange for three reasons: first, the regulatory framework standardizes assessment criteria, enhancing comparability across regions; second, public disclosure reduces foreign buyers’ information processing costs through centralized dissemination; third, publicly released information is inherently more credible than privately exchanged data and accessible to a broader buyer group.

<sup>4</sup>Sources: [https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_30804234](https://m.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_30804234) and <https://www.shanghai.gov.cn/nw31406/20241217/207848d47b344ec083cb997f0f914d20.html> (accessed in July 2025).

panel by combining transaction-level export records from Chinese customs filings with proprietary administrative data containing financial information. We implement a difference-in-differences (DID) research design. Ideally, one would compare firms that held A-type status prior to the reform but were not publicly disclosed, and examine their outcomes after the nationwide disclosure. Since pre-reform ratings are unavailable, we define treated firms as those classified as A-type in April 2015, the first year of nationwide disclosure, assuming that these firms likely would have been top-rated before the reform. While this approach cannot perfectly identify pre-reform A-type firms, it offers a credible identification strategy, namely comparing firms disclosed as A-type with those that are not.

Our results indicate that relative to other firms, firms recognized as an A-type taxpayer experience a 7.43% increase in exports following the nationwide disclosures. We find no evidence of differential pre-trends, consistent with the parallel trends assumption.<sup>5</sup> The results support the notion that information frictions previously constrained optimal trading and that A-type firms benefit from the domestic disclosure regulation in global export markets. In addition, using the subsample of transactions with identifiable buyers, we conduct the analyses at the supplier–customer level and find a stronger effect at the extensive margin: A-type firms are 7.8% relatively more likely to form new relationships following the disclosure, compared to a 5.2% increase in the likelihood of trade expansion with existing partners.

A key challenge to our interpretation is confounding from firm-level changes and concurrent policies promoting exports. To address firm-level changes, we refine our identification strategy in three ways. First, we restrict our treatment sample to firms exhibiting little change in financial metrics and tax behavior around the 2015 assessment period. Second, we focus on firms with a high predicted probability of A-type status pre-reform, ensuring that

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<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the effects are driven by enhanced export growth among treated firms, while there is limited export change among control firms (non-A-type firms). The absence of export change among control firms also supports the Stable Unit Treatment Value Assumption (SUTVA) underlying our DID estimates.

the 2015 designation reflects sustained compliance rather than abrupt behavioral shifts. Third, we employ propensity score matching on observable financial and tax characteristics to construct comparable control firms. Regarding concurrent policy confounds, our results are robust to controlling for destination jurisdiction-year (e.g., trade agreement with China), exporter industry-year (e.g., productivity shock), and province-year (e.g., export credit) level confounding factors, as well as to a stacked-DID analysis incorporating firms newly added to the A-type list in 2016 and 2018, which mitigates the effects of confounding events in a particular year. We also identify a major initiative with potential export effects: the Belt and Road Initiative (launched March 2015). Our results remain robust after excluding destination jurisdictions targeted by this initiative. Finally, we conduct cross-sectional and within-firm-year analyses below to isolate the information friction reduction mechanism from alternative channels.

We next conduct cross-sectional tests to corroborate the reduced information frictions channel underlying the documented trade expansions. Consistent with the idea that smaller and younger firms are less visible and lack established reputational capital and effective channels to credibly convey information to foreign buyers (Bourveau, Kepler, She, and Wang 2024), the positive export gains from disclosure are primarily concentrated among these firms. Moreover, the disclosure effect is present only among private firms for which financial statements are not publicly available, and in regions with a high prevalence of accounting irregularities, which undermines the perceived credibility of privately exchanged financial data. The results together suggest that the disclosure influences trade by reducing information frictions.

To further isolate the information frictions reduction channel from contemporaneous benefits from government-conferred privileges linked to the A-type designation, we adopt two approaches. First, we examine cross-sectional variation in firms' connections to the government through state ownership, building on the idea that incremental benefits from

government-conferred privileges should be weaker among firms with established government access. However, we do not find that the effect varies with firms' government connections.

Our second approach exploits within-firm-year variation in exports across destination markets by including *exporter-year* fixed effects to absorb confounding firm-year level changes, including those induced by government-conferred privileges. We find that, for the same exporter, exports increase more to destinations where foreign buyers lack government-maintained platforms (e.g., official trade portals) that provide institutionalized access to supplier information. The effect is also stronger for jurisdictions with a smaller ethnic Chinese that leads to higher information frictions preventing international trade (Rauch 1999). These results reinforce the interpretation that the reform operated through reduced information frictions rather than merely through improved firm fundamentals.

Having established that disclosure enhances top-rated taxpayers' exports, a natural question is whether it improves the efficiency of international trade relationships. By mitigating information frictions, disclosure should improve buyer-supplier matching and stability, while lowering buyers' search and monitoring costs and improving their inventory management efficiency. To test this idea, we employ shipment-level data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which identifies importers and their sourcing from suppliers around the globe. We find that U.S. firms more reliant on Chinese exporters experience fewer relationship terminations, lower SG&A expenses, and higher inventory turnover following the disclosure, consistent with improved matching quality and enhanced supply chain efficiency.

Our study makes several contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to the literature on the real effects of information disclosure. Mandatory financial disclosure is a common policy tool for addressing information asymmetries between firms and external parties (see Leuz and Wysocki 2016 for a review). Our study examines a distinct policy tool where the government acts as a *de facto* credit rating agency by issuing a public signal of tax

compliance, and demonstrates its effectiveness in the international trade market.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, our results complement evidence on the effectiveness of formal export promotion agencies in facilitating trades (Lederman, Olarreaga, and Payton 2010), but point to the potential of a distinct administrative tool through which governments can reveal non-proprietary information that supplements financial disclosures (Glaeser and Omartian 2022).

Second, we add to two streams of tax literature. The first stream of literature focuses on the effects of corporate tax policy on product market and supply chain outcomes, largely focusing on changes in tax rates and enforcement (De Simone and Olbert 2022; Gallemore, van der Geest, Jacob, and Peters 2025; Chow, Maydew, and She 2026; Hanlon, Shroff, and Yoon 2026; Bonetti, Jacob, and Ormazabal 2026; Ghosh, Jacob, Kang, and Zhang 2026). Another stream of literature studies the real effects of tax-related disclosure (Jacob 2021; Hoopes, Robinson, and Slemrod 2024; Lester and Olbert 2025).<sup>7</sup> We provide evidence on the real effects of a distinct tax-related policy, public disclosure of tax compliance, through a new channel of reducing information asymmetry between trade partners.

Third, we contribute to emerging research on the interplay between public disclosure and contracting along supply chains. Public disclosures can function as a verifiable and widely accessible device that complements private communication between business partners (Gigler 1994). Consistent with this view, prior studies document that firms use public disclosures to coordinate with product market partners (Bourveau, She, and Žaldokas 2020; Crawford, Huang, Li, and Yang 2020; Bourveau et al. 2024), and that the quality of the disclosures influences

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<sup>6</sup> Bonetti and Ormazabal (2023) show that publishing the top 50 companies in a region based on an independent corporate governance assessment increases foreign equity investment. Our study differs in two ways. First, we examine government-administered disclosure rather than third-party assessments and focus the impacts on cross-border trade rather than equity investment. Second, our rating applies universally across firms, not just the largest as in Bonetti and Ormazabal (2023). In fact, we find that such disclosure is more valuable for small private firms and complements financial information. This finding cannot be inferred from Bonetti and Ormazabal (2023) but has policy implications for expanding market access to small firms that drive the majority of economic growth.

<sup>7</sup> Hanlon, Hoopes, and Shackelford (2025) studies tax shaming disclosures but finds limited negative customer responses. The asymmetry could reflect distinct reputational dynamics: firms are more inclined to publicize praise but withhold shaming information, while governments and media face greater risks in disseminating shaming than praise, leading to broader diffusion and stronger real effects of tax-praise-based disclosure.

supply chain transactions (Bauer, Henderson, and Lynch 2018; Cheng, Sun, Ye, and Zhang 2020). Our study extends this literature by providing new evidence that when credible firm-initiated disclosures are not available, government-managed administrative data can serve as a credible informational substitute.

## **2. Background and Hypothesis**

### **2.1 The Taxpayer Rating Disclosure Policy in China**

Before 2014, China's taxpayer credit evaluation and recognition systems were decentralized and fragmented across local tax authorities. Local tax authorities operated their own honor roll programs to recognize compliant taxpayers, often granting local procedural benefits such as reduced audits and expedited processing. However, these programs lacked uniform standards and typically did not disclose the assessment outcomes, resulting in limited visibility beyond local jurisdictions. In 2014, China's State Taxation Administration (STA) implemented a landmark reform by establishing a unified national taxpayer credit evaluation system, formalized by the *Announcement of the State Administration of Taxation on Issuing the Measures for Tax Credit Administration*.<sup>8</sup> The reform is closely aligned with China's broader agenda of developing a nationwide social credit system aimed at strengthening market trust, enhancing regulatory efficiency, and promoting compliance. Thus, the regulatory reform is not a policy response to nationwide scandals such as tax-related controversies, which alleviates concerns that any observed changes in trade simply reflect shifts in market sentiment (Glaeser and Guay 2017).

This system evaluates corporate taxpayers annually based on a comprehensive set of criteria that extends beyond simple tax payment behavior. The evaluation covers all major tax types, including VAT and corporate income tax, and assesses a wide range of compliance

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<sup>8</sup> State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2014). Announcement of the State Administration of Taxation on Issuing the Measures for Tax Credit Administration (Announcement No. 40 [2014] of the State Administration of Taxation) [in Chinese]. Available at: [https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2014/content\\_2771092.htm](https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2014/content_2771092.htm) (accessed July 2025).

dimensions: timely and accurate filing of tax returns, appropriate use of tax incentives, punctual payment of tax liabilities and penalties, proper management and issuance of VAT invoices, and responsiveness to tax audits. In addition, it incorporates indicators of broader regulatory compliance and internal control quality, including bookkeeping practices, the quality and consistency of reported financial information, and the absence of fraudulent behavior or serious administrative violations. Together, these elements provide a holistic indication of a firm's tax compliance, financial prudence, and the reliability of its transactional records. Firms are assigned a composite score that places them into one of several rating classes ranging from A (highest) to D (lowest), with "A-type" taxpayers representing the most compliant, transparent, and trustworthy entities in the eyes of the tax authority.

Central to this reform is the annual public disclosure of "A-type" taxpayer names on the STA's official website starting from April 2015. This nationwide, centralized disclosure provides a transparent, credible signal of superior tax compliance and is accessible to a broad base of firm stakeholders. Beyond the STA website, this information is also integrated into firms' broader credit profiles maintained within the state's public corporate credit information repository.<sup>9</sup> It is also accessible through widely used commercial credit platforms in China, enabling businesses and financial institutions to incorporate tax compliance data into their routine credit assessments and due diligence processes.<sup>10</sup>

In July 2016, the STA and several other central government agencies jointly expanded the use of the taxpayer credit system by introducing an inter-ministerial incentive framework that links A-type status to a bundle of 41 administrative facilitation measures, including expedited customs clearance, prioritized VAT refund processing, reduced inspection frequency, and preferential access to certain government services. This reform marked the first nationwide

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<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.creditchina.gov.cn>.

<sup>10</sup> See Online Appendix B for detailed background on the STA's taxpayer credit rating system, including its introduction timeline, rating methodology, and public disclosure process.

linkage of administrative benefits to the taxpayer compliance rating beyond the centralized public disclosure.<sup>11</sup>

Two key features distinguish China's taxpayer credit disclosure system from public tax disclosure programs in other countries.<sup>12</sup> First, China's system is comprehensive, encompassing all aspects of tax compliance for all taxes rather than focusing on a single tax type or limited filings. Unlike jurisdictions that publicly disclose income tax related information, China's evaluation considers a broad spectrum of tax-related behaviors, including VAT, corporate income tax, tax invoice management, and timely payments of all tax liabilities and penalties.<sup>13</sup> This holistic approach ensures that the "A-type" rating reflects a firm's overall tax compliance and regulatory integrity, offering a more complete and reliable signal of the firm's legitimacy and operational soundness.

Second, China's public disclosure policy preserves firms' proprietary information by revealing only the names of taxpayers that receive the "A-type" designation without disclosing detailed tax return data, financial information, or sensitive business information. This contrasts with practices in some jurisdictions where public disclosures of detailed tax filings can raise concerns about confidentiality. By limiting the scope of publicly shared information, the STA's approach balances transparency and privacy, reducing firms' proprietary costs while still providing credible, verifiable signals to external stakeholders. This design is especially important for SMEs, which are often vulnerable to competitive risks from disclosing financial information (Breuer et al. 2025).

To contextualize the policy and illuminate how the STA's evaluation criteria map into

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<sup>11</sup> See [https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xxgk/zcfb/tz/201607/t20160712\\_963124\\_ext.html](https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xxgk/zcfb/tz/201607/t20160712_963124_ext.html).

<sup>12</sup> See Hoopes, Robinson, and Slemrod (2024) for a review of this literature.

<sup>13</sup> For example, since 2013, the Australian Taxation Office has published select corporate tax return data for large businesses to promote public confidence and voluntary compliance ([www.ato.gov.au/businesses-and-organisations/corporate-tax-measures-and-assurance/large-business/corporate-tax-transparency/report-of-entity-tax-information#ato-Overview](http://www.ato.gov.au/businesses-and-organisations/corporate-tax-measures-and-assurance/large-business/corporate-tax-transparency/report-of-entity-tax-information#ato-Overview)). Similarly, the European Union mandates public Country-by-Country Reporting for large multinationals, requiring disclosure of income, profits, and economic activity by jurisdiction (European Union 2021). Unlike China's comprehensive and simplified taxpayer rating system covering firms of all sizes, these initiatives focus on large entities and involve more detailed but less accessible information.

observable firm characteristics, we examine which firm attributes predict the receipt of an A-type rating at the onset of disclosure. Using administrative firm-level data matched to the universe of Chinese exporters during the pre-policy period (2012–2014) (we discuss our data and sample in Section 3.1), we estimate an OLS model in which the dependent variable equals one for firms disclosed as A-type in 2015 (the first disclosure year). We include a set of covariates that plausibly relate to firms' tax and business compliance: business scale and administrative capacity (*Size*, *Employees*); profitability (*ROS*); leverage (*Leverage*); liquidity (*Cash*); verifiability of operations (*Tangibility*); and income tax burden (*ETR*).

As reported in Table D2 of the Online Appendix D, firms with stronger financial condition (*ROS*, *Cash*), larger scale and organizational resources (*Size*, *Employees*), and that bear a higher tax burden (*ETR*) are more likely to be designated A-Type. By contrast, more highly levered firms (*Leverage*) are less likely to receive the top rating, consistent with liquidity pressures raising the likelihood of delayed tax remittance. We then examine the year-to-year persistence of the A-type designation by extending the sample to a panel consisting of all three post-policy years. As shown in column (2), firms rated A-type in one year are approximately 64% more likely to receive an A-type rating in the subsequent year, reflecting the stability of the underlying compliance assessments.

Notably, the overall predictive power is low: the adjusted R-squared is only about 13% in column (1), indicating that A-type recognition cannot be reliably inferred from aggregated financial performance. Moreover, because these firm-level financial data (particularly for private firms) are collected by the government and not disclosed publicly, it is unlikely that foreign buyers have access to such information or can accurately predict A-type recognition. Thus, the disclosure likely conveys incremental information to the foreign buyers.

Furthermore, while top-rated firms differ from non-top-rated firms along many dimensions, our DID design does not require the two groups to be identical. Instead,

identification relies on the assumption that, absent the disclosure, treated and control firms would have exhibited parallel export trends, which we validate empirically. We also implement matching approaches that enhance the comparability between treatment and control firms.

## **2.2 Information Frictions in International Trade**

Information frictions constitute a fundamental barrier in international trade, influencing how efficiently cross-border transactions are conducted (Allen 2014). From buyers' perspective, these frictions reflect the difficulty they face in obtaining credible information regarding the quality, reliability, and integrity of potential foreign suppliers (Rauch 1999; Anderson and van Wincoop 2004; Chaney 2018). Uncertainty about partner quality increases both the cost of initiating new relationships and sustaining existing transactions, as foreign buyers must bear additional search and monitoring costs to mitigate transaction risks (Allen 2014; Macchiavello and Morjaria 2015).

Rauch's (1999) seminal work emphasizes the role of information asymmetry as a critical determinant of trade flows, highlighting that imperfect information limits market integration, particularly for differentiated goods that require more stringent evaluations of product quality and supplier credibility. Subsequent studies, including Anderson and van Wincoop (2004), underscore that incomplete information elevates both explicit and implicit transaction costs, thus constraining market access and reducing overall trade volumes. Chaney (2018) further demonstrates that persistent uncertainty and incomplete information lead firms to prioritize trusted, known suppliers over potentially advantageous but unfamiliar alternatives, thereby restricting optimal market allocations.

Empirical evidence consistently supports the view that information frictions substantially impede international trade. For example, Macchiavello and Morjaria (2015) document how uncertainty and information asymmetry significantly raise contracting costs in international trade, influencing both initial relationship formation and long-term partnerships.

Similarly, Allen (2014) finds that trade is disproportionately concentrated among parties with established relationships or those sharing informational proximity, underscoring the premium placed on credible information in mitigating uncertainty. Casella and Rauch (2002) further show that ethnic networks and informal reputational systems can serve as substitutes for formal enforcement mechanisms, facilitating trade in environments where legal institutions are weak or contracting costs are high.

Critically, these informational barriers are disproportionately severe for smaller and younger firms, especially those from emerging or developing markets (WTO 2016). Such firms often lack established reputations, extensive market presence, and credible third-party validations, placing them at a structural disadvantage when competing internationally (WTO 2016). Thus, the establishment of reliable, accessible, and credible information channels becomes particularly valuable for reducing buyer uncertainty, lowering transaction costs, and fostering trade expansion among firms typically hindered by informational opacity.

Financial and tax disclosures are central to reducing information asymmetry in business contracting, as they provide credible signals of firm quality, operational integrity, and regulatory compliance. Prior research shows that reliable financial information mitigates contracting frictions (Leuz and Wysocki 2016; Cheng et al. 2020; Minnis and Sutherland 2017). For example, Cheng et al. (2020) document that mandatory audit of financial statements facilitates firm-level exports. Yet the effectiveness of audit-based reporting hinges on credibility, standardization, and accessibility, which vary widely across contexts (Minnis 2011; Breuer 2021). In many emerging economies, financial reporting standards are weaker, corporate transparency is limited, and audited financial statements remain prohibitively costly or inaccessible for SMEs. In such settings, alternative disclosures from trusted intermediaries, such as government authorities, can fill informational gaps and complement private reporting (Lederman et al. 2010). Our study provides evidence along these lines, drawing on a

government-initiated disclosure program based on standardized taxpayer compliance ratings. This mechanism offers a credible and widely accessible signal without imposing the substantial costs associated with audited financial statements.

### **2.3 Hypothesis Development**

Credible signals of operational and financial integrity reduce transaction costs by mitigating buyer uncertainty about supplier quality and reliability (Rauch 1999; Cheng et al. 2020). Governments often possess private information about firms, such as compliance histories, tax filings, and financial condition, that may not all be readily available through market channels. When governments choose to disclose verified indicators of firm compliance, such disclosures may reduce information asymmetry and improve the efficiency of market transactions, particularly in settings where alternative signals are weak or costly to obtain.

In our setting, China's tax authority leverages privileged access to firm-level data to evaluate corporate taxpayers and publicly recognize those with exemplary compliance as "A-type" taxpayers. This designation is particularly important in an economy where value-added tax (VAT) dominates, since VAT compliance requires transaction-level documentation that credibly reflects underlying business activity (Pomeranz 2015). Moreover, the evaluation extends beyond tax obligations to include recordkeeping, reporting accuracy, and regulatory compliance. The resulting A-type classification thus provides a standardized and government-certified signal of operational discipline, transactional integrity, and commercial legitimacy.

Public disclosure of this signal has the potential to reduce information frictions in international trade. By improving the visibility and perceived trustworthiness of Chinese exporters, it lowers the search costs foreign buyers face when screening potential suppliers and provides a credible proxy for contractual performance risk. Although highly rated firms may have previously conveyed this information privately, public disclosure conveys incremental value for several reasons. First, government regulation standardizes assessment criteria,

enhancing comparability across firms and regions. Second, disclosure reduces information processing costs by aggregating and disseminating data through an official channel. Third, signals released by a regulatory authority are inherently more credible than private communications, which can be subject to misrepresentation. Collectively, these mechanisms facilitate top-rated firms to secure new foreign customers (Grossman and Helpman 2005). Consistent with this view, the anecdotal evidence provided in Online Appendix A.1 demonstrates that Chinese exporters actively advertise their A-type status on business-to-business platforms used by foreign buyers. In addition to the extensive margin effect, the annual updating of ratings may also reduce post-contract monitoring costs, fostering more stable and repeated transactions at the intensive margin. Both mechanisms, therefore, predict that the disclosure will increase exports among A-type taxpayers.

On the other hand, the government-issued recognition may also generate unintended frictions in international contracting. Foreign buyers could interpret such recognition as implying heightened governmental oversight and rigidly documented contractual processes. In contexts where flexibility and adaptability are critical to cross-border transactions, the perception of increased compliance obligations may elevate transaction costs and discourage engagement with top-rated firms. Moreover, the effectiveness of this disclosure depends on the perceived integrity of the underlying evaluation system. In cross-border settings where institutional trust varies substantially, foreign buyers may remain skeptical of government-administered ratings and view them as less credible than privately exchanged information (Nannestad 2008; Guiso et al. 2009). Furthermore, to protect proprietary details, the recognition is highly aggregated, offering only a broad “A-type” designation rather than granular insights into firm operations or financial standing. This aggregation reduces the informational precision available to potential buyers, limiting the extent to which the disclosure can alleviate uncertainty in trade relationships.

Based on these discussions, we state our hypothesis (in null form) as follows:

*Hypothesis:* Firms publicly disclosed as A-type taxpayers do not experience changes in exports following the disclosure.

### **3. Data and Sample**

#### **3.1 Data Sources and Sample Selection**

We obtain transaction-level export transaction data for Chinese firms from S&P Global Panjiva, a commercial provider of international trade data covering over ten countries and widely used in empirical trade research (e.g., (Smirnyagin and Tsyvinski 2022; Alfaro et al. 2025; Ayyagari, Cheng, and Weinberger 2025; Bisetti, She, and Zaldokas 2026; Chow, Maydew, and She 2026). Our primary analysis uses the full set of Chinese export transactions from 2012 to 2017.<sup>14</sup> Each record reports the exporter's name and address, shipment date, destination jurisdiction, Harmonized System (HS) product codes, and shipment value, as required by the General Administration of Customs of China in export declarations.<sup>15</sup>

A key advantage of the Chinese export data is the consistent availability of core measurement fields. Unlike U.S. bill-of-lading data, where shipment values are optional (Flaaen et al. 2023), Chinese customs filings mandate transaction value for every export transaction. These requirements ensure standardized, reliable measures of trade flows, enabling us to track firm-level export activity over time and across destinations with precision. The key limitation, however, is that it does not contain information on the identities of foreign buyers.

We aggregate export shipment data at the firm-destination-year level, and in doing so, we define a relationship as a firm–destination pair and track its trade dynamics across time. We merge it with detailed firm-level administrative data from China's National Tax Survey

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<sup>14</sup> Panjiva provides the universe of shipment-level export data from the General Administration of Customs of China for 2013–2017, with incomplete coverage for 2012. To fill this gap, we supplement the 2012 records with data from an alternative vendor. Based on discussions with representatives from S&P Panjiva, China's customs authority, the General Administration of Customs, ceased making firm-level trade data available in 2018.

<sup>15</sup> We validate the comprehensiveness and accuracy of our raw export data by comparing it with China's official export statistics. The aggregated export values derived from our dataset closely align with the official statistics.

Database, jointly compiled by the STA and the Ministry of Finance.<sup>16</sup> This dataset provides a uniquely rich profile of Chinese firms, including comprehensive financial, tax, and operational characteristics. Next, we obtain the identities of exporters publicly disclosed as “A-type” taxpayers directly from the STA’s official website.

Our final sample contains 2,471,341 firm-export destination observations across 98,338 unique firms from 2012 to 2017, covering a six-year window around the event year 2015. We end the sample in 2017, as this represents the last complete year of available export transaction data. Table D1 in Online Appendix D describes our sample selection process.

### 3.2 Research Design

Our identification strategy exploits within-firm-destination variation in export volumes around the 2015 nationwide introduction of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status, using a difference-in-differences design. In the baseline analysis, treatment firms are defined as exporters that were designated as A-type taxpayers in April 2015, the onset of disclosure. Control firms are defined as exporters that were not on the 2015 A-type list. In additional analyses, we assess the sensitivity of our results by (i) restricting the treatment group to firms that consistently retained A-type status throughout the post-disclosure period, and (ii) using a stacked DID approach and classifying firms that were newly added to the A-type list after 2016 as additional treatment firms. Across these alternative definitions, our inferences remain robust. We do not impose these conditions in our primary analyses to avoid the risk of reverse causality that disclosure-induced changes in export activity affect a firm’s likelihood of subsequently obtaining A-type status. We estimate the following DID regression model:

$$Export_{i,d,t} = \beta_1 Treat_i \times Post_t + Controls_{i,t-1} + \eta_{i,d} + \sigma_t + \epsilon_{i,d,t}, \quad (1)$$

where  $i, d, t$  index firm, destination jurisdiction, and year, respectively.  $Export_{i,d,t}$  is the export

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<sup>16</sup> Prior studies focusing on Chinese settings have widely utilized the dataset (e.g., Liu and Mao 2019; Chen, Liu, Suárez Serrato, and Xu 2021; Chen, Jiang, Liu, Serrato, and Xu 2023) See Liu and Mao (2019) and Chen et al. (2023) for detailed discussions of the database.

intensity, defined as the value of exports by firm  $i$  to destination jurisdiction  $d$  in year  $t$ , scaled by sales in year  $t-1$ .  $Post_t$  is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014.  $Treat_i$  is an indicator equal to one if firm  $i$  is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise.

We include firm–destination jurisdiction fixed effects ( $\eta_{i,d}$ ) to control for time-invariant attributes of a given firm–market pair that could affect export (e.g., geographic distance). We also include year fixed effects ( $\sigma_t$ ) to control for macroeconomic shocks common to all firms in each given year (e.g., global trade conditions). After accounting for these fixed effects, our coefficient of interest  $\beta_l$  identifies differential changes in export over time for the same firm to the same destination market after receiving A-type taxpayer recognition, compared to firms that did not receive such recognition.

We include several firm-level control variables (*Controls*) to account for time-varying firm characteristics that may influence exports. These controls, all lagged by one year, include: *Size* (log of total assets), *Leverage* (total debt divided by total assets), *Cash* (cash divided by total assets), and *ROS* (return on sales). We cluster standard errors at the firm level.

### **3.3 Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents the summary statistics for the key variables in our sample. The average export intensity (*Export*), defined as the firm-destination jurisdiction-level export value scaled by lagged sales, is approximately 7.1%, although substantial heterogeneity exists across firm–destination pairs. Approximately 33.5% of observations correspond to firms publicly disclosed as A-type taxpayers in the first disclosure year. The sample firms have an average operational history of 12 years, with 96% of firms privately held and thus lacking publicly accessible financial statements. The mean total sales and assets for firms in our sample are USD 165

million and USD 154 million, respectively.<sup>17</sup>

Panels B and C of Table 1 provide additional detail on the industry and geographic distribution of treated firms. Panel B shows that treated firms span a wide range of sectors. Sectors with the highest treatment rates include smelting and pressing of ferrous metals (36.4%) and medical and pharmaceutical products (35.2%). Panel C reports the distribution of treated firms across provinces of firm locations. Treatment rates vary across provinces, from over 56% in Tianjin and 35% in Sichuan to under 3% in Hainan. The dispersion in A-type firms across both industries and regions indicates that the A-type designation is broadly distributed rather than concentrated in a specific sector or locality, reflecting a diverse cross-section of China's exporting economy.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Effects of Rating Disclosure on Firm Exports

Table 2 reports the baseline results examining the effect of disclosure on top-rated firms' exports. Column (1) includes only year and firm–destination fixed effects without control variables, thereby addressing the concern that incorporating covariates potentially influenced by the treatment could compromise causal identification (Gormley and Matsa 2014). The coefficient on  $Treat \times Post$  is 0.501 and significant at the 1% level (t-stat = 5.33). Column (2) further includes exporter-level controls. The coefficient remains in a similar economic magnitude and is significant at the 1% level (coef. = 0.527; t-stat = 6.34). Focusing on column (2), the estimate indicates that, on average, A-type firms experienced a 0.527 increase in export intensity relative to non-A-type firms following the disclosure. Given the mean export intensity of 7.09% in the sample, the estimated effect corresponds to approximately a 7.4% increase relative to the mean. Overall, this finding is consistent with the

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<sup>17</sup> Converted from CNY 1.03 billion and CNY 0.97 billion based on the average exchange rate between CNY and USD of 6.28 in 2015.

view that the disclosure of taxpayer ratings mitigates information frictions in international trade, thereby enabling highly rated firms to expand their exports.

#### **4.2 Identification Assumption and Confounding Factors**

We next conduct a battery of tests to validate the identification assumption underlying our DID specification. First, we evaluate the robustness of the baseline result to potential confounding firm fundamental changes and report the results in Table 3, Panel A. Column (1) requires treated firms to exhibit limited changes in key firm-level financial characteristics (i.e., total assets, total liabilities, and total tax payments) from 2013 to 2014, as the 2015 rating was assessed based on 2014 tax performance. Specifically, we require the year-over-year percentage changes in total assets, total liabilities, and total tax payments during the first assessment period to fall within a  $\pm 10\%$  range. This test helps address the concern that A-type recognition is confounded with an abrupt change in firm fundamentals. Column (2) redefines treatment based on predicted A-type designation using firm characteristics measured based on administrative, non-public financial information in 2014. Specifically, we set *Treat* to one if the predicted probability of receiving an A-type rating in the first assessment year exceeds the sample mean, thereby mitigating concerns that unobserved factors drive both treatment assignment and export growth. Column (3) implements propensity score matching (PSM) and matches treated firms to control firms via nearest neighbor matching on common support using fitted values from the pre-policy prediction model. Across all three specifications, the coefficient on *Treat* $\times$ *Post* remains positive and statistically significant. These results suggest that our findings are not driven by confounding abrupt firm changes.

Second, we estimate an event-study specification to validate the parallel trends assumption. Specifically, we replace the post-period indicator (*Post*) in equation (1) with year dummies, using 2014 as the benchmark year. We plot the coefficient estimates of the interaction terms from this specification in Panel A of Figure 1. The coefficients for the pre-

disclosure years, 2013 and 2014, are close to zero and statistically insignificant, suggesting no differential pre-trends between treated and control firms. In contrast, the interaction terms for the post-disclosure years are all positive and statistically significant at the 5% level. These results support the parallel trends assumption and indicate that the observed increase in exports among A-type firms emerges only after the initiation of the public disclosure policy in 2015.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, we evaluate the robustness of our findings to contemporaneous shocks at local (e.g., export credit), industry (e.g., industry level productivity shock), or export destination (e.g., new trade agreement with China) levels that may simultaneously affect firm performance and tax compliance capacity and report the results in Table 3, Panel B. To do this, we adopt alternative fixed effects specifications and report the results in Table 3, Panel B. Columns (1)–(3) include firm-jurisdiction fixed effects alongside exporter province-year, exporter industry-year, and destination jurisdiction-year fixed effects to control for contemporaneous changes at local, industry, and destination jurisdiction levels, respectively, while Column (4) incorporates all these fixed effects simultaneously. We then evaluate whether our results are robust to a major policy initiative that may influence firms’ export performance: China’s Belt and Road Initiative. In column (5), we exclude destination jurisdictions that are part of this initiative as of 2017. The coefficient on  $Treat \times Post$  across all these specifications remains positive and statistically significant. Panel B of Figure 1 plots the dynamic effects using this restricted sample, again validating the parallel trends assumption.

### 4.3 Cross-sectional Analyses

We conduct cross-sectional analyses to corroborate our findings that disclosure mitigates information frictions and thereby facilitates cross-border trade. First, we show that

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<sup>18</sup> In Figure D1 in Online Appendix D, we plot the residualized export intensity separately for the treatment and control firms, following recent literature that uses residualized outcome paths to illustrate group-specific dynamics (e.g., Abeler, Huffman, and Raymond 2025; Engelberg, Lu, Mullins, and Townsend 2025). The figure shows that the post-disclosure divergence is primarily characterized by an increase in export intensity among A-type firms, while export intensity among non-A-type firms remains relatively stable, suggesting that our baseline estimates are driven by export expansion among treated firms rather than offsetting declines among control firms.

the effect of disclosure is more pronounced for firms lacking reputational capital and reliable channels to credibly communicate with foreign buyers. Second, we highlight the signalling role of disclosure regarding exporters' financial performance by documenting that its effect varies systematically with the availability of credible, firm-initiated financial statements.

#### **4.3.1 Reputation Capital and Credibility of Private Communication**

Banerjee and Duflo (2000) argue that larger and more established firms build reputational capital that mitigates concerns about opportunistic behaviour (e.g., information misrepresentation) in contracting, since a persistent record of opportunism would eventually force such firms out of the market due to the lack of willing counterparties. Consistent with this view, firm size and age serve as signals of information reliability, reflecting survival in the industry over an extended period. By contrast, given their limited reputational history, smaller and younger exporters' private information provision is more likely to be discounted by foreign buyers, making a credible public signal particularly valuable (Bourveau et al. 2024).

To test this idea, we develop a binary variable, *Small*, which is equal to one if the firm's average total assets during the pre-period 2012–2014 are below the sample median, and zero otherwise. We then augment our DID regression model (1) with *Small* and its interaction terms with *Treat* and *Post*. Column (1) of Table 4 shows that while *Treat*×*Post* continues to be positive (coef. = 0.241; t-stat = 2.42), *Treat*×*Post*×*Small* is positive (coef. = 0.399; t-stat = 2.42), indicating that the export gain induced by the disclosure for small firms is 1.66 times greater than that for large firms. Similarly, we classify firms as a young firm (*Young*) if the firm's establishment year is later than the sample median. Column (2) shows that *Treat*×*Post*×*Young* is positive (coef. = 0.347; t-stat = 2.06). On average, the export gain for young firms nearly doubles that for mature firms.

Overall, the evidence supports the view that public disclosure of tax compliance ratings has a disproportionately stronger effect on smaller and younger firms, which lack established

reputational capital and effective channels to credibly convey information to foreign buyers.

### 4.3.2 Accessibility and Credibility of Financial Statements

Next, we examine heterogeneity in the availability of an alternative but critical information source: audited financial statements. As discussed in Section 2, the A-type rating serves as a credible signal of a firm's financial soundness, which may also be inferred from audited financial statements. We therefore predict that the disclosure effect should be stronger for firms without credible financial reporting.

Our data allows us to test this prediction by distinguishing between public and private exporters. Public firms are required to disclose audited financial statements, whereas private firms are not subject to such mandates. Accordingly, we expect the disclosure-induced export gains to be more pronounced among private firms. To test this, we construct a binary variable, *Private*, equal to one for privately held exporters and zero for publicly listed firms. We then augment equation (1) with the triple interactions of *Private*, *Treat*, and *Post*. Column (1) of Table 5 shows that  $Treat \times Post \times Private$  is positive and statistically significant at the 5% level (coef. = 0.956; t-stat = 2.13), while the main effect on  $Treat \times Post$  turns statistically insignificant. These results suggest that the disclosure of A-type rating only has an impact on private firms but not on public firms, which have readily available public financial information.

Next, we examine heterogeneity in the credibility of financial information that is conveyed through public financial statements or privately exchanged between trading partners. Intuitively, the credibility of firm-provided information hinges on accounting quality, which in turn shapes buyers' willingness to rely on such information in contracting (Bauer et al. 2018; Cheng et al. 2020). Because a substantial portion of our sample comprises private firms, for which firm-level measures of accounting quality are unavailable, we employ a regional proxy for the reporting environment. Specifically, we assume that a high fraction of public firms with accounting irregularities in a region undermines the perceived credibility of the financial

statements for firms operating in close geographic proximity that shares similar fundamental deficiencies such as weak regulatory enforcement, limited accounting expertise, or cultural norms (Francis and Yu 2009; McGuire, Omer, and Sharp 2012; Lennox and Wu 2022).

We construct a binary indicator, *High Restate*, equal to one if the firm is headquartered in a province with an above-median fraction of firms detected with accounting irregularities during 2012–2014, and zero otherwise. Column (2) of Table 5 shows that the coefficient on  $Treat \times Post \times High\ Restate$  is positive (coef. = 0.636; t-stat = 3.72), suggesting that the disclosure of tax compliance status provides greater incremental information in environments where firm-initiated financial disclosures are perceived to be less credible.

#### **4.4. Information Channel versus Government-conferred Privileges**

While our cross-sectional evidence based on exporters' information environments supports the information channel, a potential concern is that the observed effects could capture contemporaneous benefits from government-conferred privileges linked to the A-type designation. Importantly, two institutional features help alleviate the concern that government-conferred privileges are driving the documented results. First, preferential administrative treatment for highly compliant taxpayers already existed under decentralized local honor roll systems prior to the nationwide reform. Second, the coordinated national incentive framework linking A-type status to broader administrative facilitation was announced and introduced close to the end of the assessment window underlying the ratings in our sample, limiting firms' ability to adjust behaviors in anticipation of these benefits.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, we conduct two sets to further disentangle the information channel underlying the observed export gains from contemporaneous government-conferred privileges.

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<sup>19</sup> The framework was introduced in July 2016 and first applied to the 2016 fiscal year. It therefore does not affect our treatment classification, which is based on the fiscal year 2014 assessment disclosed in 2015. Firms also had only limited time within the 2016 fiscal year (the final assessment year in our sample) to adjust behavior in anticipation of these benefits. Further, any administrative advantages could arise no earlier than when the 2016 rating is disclosed in Q2 2017, the final year of our sample period.

#### 4.4.1 Variation in Government Ties

First, we examine whether the observed export response to A-type disclosure is driven primarily by government-conferred administrative benefits, and we do so by exploiting firms' state-owned enterprise (SOE) status. SOEs typically maintain close ties with government agencies and likely enjoy preferential access to administrative resources, regulatory support, and policy implementation channels, including customs clearance, financing, and contract opportunities. If the export gains associated with A-type disclosure primarily reflect incremental administrative privileges or preferential treatment granted by the government, we would expect the effect to be less pronounced for SOEs.

To test this idea, we estimate a triple-difference specification that interacts the baseline DID term in equation (1) with an indicator for state ownership (*SOE*). Table 6, Panel A reports the results. The coefficient on  $Treat \times Post$  remains positive and statistically significant, indicating a strong export response among non-SOEs. Importantly, the triple interaction term  $Treat \times Post \times SOE$  is statistically insignificant. The results suggest that the disclosure effect is not weakened by government connection, contrary to what would be expected if administrative privileges were the primary mechanism driving the baseline results. Moreover, this pattern also mitigates the concern that A-type firm status may simply serve as a signal for firms' government connections.

#### 4.4.2 Within-exporter Variation

Next, we conduct a within-exporter analysis and exploit cross-destination differences in ex ante information frictions. If disclosure relaxes information asymmetry, a treated supplier should exhibit larger increases in exports within the same year to destinations that ex ante face more hurdles to learn about Chinese suppliers than to other destinations. We implement this test using a triple-difference specification that interacts the DID term in equation (1) with pre-2015 destination-level measures of information frictions. Importantly, we add exporter-year

fixed effects to absorb all contemporaneous exporter-level changes. Under this stringent fixed-effects structure, identification derives solely from incremental export by the same treated supplier in the same year to destination markets facing higher ex ante information frictions.

We first examine the existence of free trade agreements (FTAs) between China and its trading partners. These agreements lead to enhanced information exchanges between partners through government-maintained platforms, such as trade information portals, enquiry points, and customs ‘single window’ systems, along with regulatory cooperation and transparency rules. These mechanisms institutionalize the exchange of regulatory and supplier information, thereby reducing information frictions for foreign buyers (USITC 2021). Consequently, destinations with an FTA with China offer buyers more institutionalized information channels. Further, by expanding bilateral trade and fostering repeated interactions (Baier and Bergstrand 2007), FTAs enhance private information channels between buyers and suppliers (Carballo, Rodriguez Chatruc, Salas Santa, and Volpe Martincus 2022).

Building on this idea, we use the existence of an FTA in the pre-policy period between China and a destination jurisdiction as a measure of institutional information channels. We construct a binary indicator, *No FTA*, equal to one for destinations without an FTA with China in force prior to 2015 and zero otherwise. As reported in column (1) of Table 6, Panel B, the triple interaction  $Treat \times Post \times No\ FTA$  is positive and statistically significant (coef. = 0.147; t-stat = 2.23). This finding suggests that, for a given top-rated exporter, disclosure enables it to expand more in destinations where foreign buyers previously lacked access to reliable information through institutional channels.

Second, we explore the heterogeneity in co-ethnic networks, which serve as private information conduits that overcome language and culture barriers, transmitting referrals and knowledge and supporting relational enforcement via reputation interactions (Gould 1994;

Casella and Rauch 2002).<sup>20</sup> We thus posit that a larger overseas Chinese presence in a destination provides buyers with stronger private information channels to learn about Chinese suppliers; conversely, where such diaspora networks are small, public A-type disclosure should carry more decision-relevant information. We construct *Weak Ethnic Network*, an indicator equal to one for destinations not among the top 15 jurisdictions by the share of overseas Chinese in the resident population and zero otherwise.<sup>21</sup> As predicted, column (2) of Table 6, Panel B shows that the coefficient on  $Treat \times Post \times Weak\ Ethnic\ Network$  is positive and statistically significant (coef. = 0.147; t-stat = 2.29), indicating that disclosure enhances cross-border trades with destinations lacking ethnic-network-based information channels with China.

## 5. Supplier-Customer Level Analyses

A limitation of exporter–destination–year analysis is that it does not include the identity of foreign customers, preventing us from distinguishing whether trade changes arise from initiations of new relationships or from adjustments within existing ones. To overcome this challenge, we complement the supplier–destination results with analyses at the supplier–customer level by leveraging U.S. maritime import records from S&P Global Panjiva. Panjiva compiles bills of lading released by U.S. Customs and Border Protection through Freedom of Information Act requests and harmonizes shipper and consignee names to persistent firm identifiers, enabling longitudinal tracking of exporters and importers over time in U.S. import transactions. Because both importers and exporters are identifiable, the data also allow us to examine potential downstream supply-chain implications on the U.S. customer side.

### 5.1 Effects of Rating Disclosure on Firm Exports at the Relationship Level

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Gould (1994) shows that immigrant stocks in the U.S. increase bilateral exports and imports with origin countries, consistent with co-ethnic networks providing market knowledge and business contacts that reduce transaction costs. Casella and Rauch (2002) develop a formal framework in which group ties substitute for anonymous-market institutions by facilitating search and sustaining contracts through reputational sanctions, which are especially valuable when product quality is hard to verify or legal enforcement is weak.

<sup>21</sup> The top 15 jurisdictions are: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Peru, Myanmar, Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia.  
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas\\_Chinese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overseas_Chinese) (accessed August 2025)

Using Panjiva’s U.S. import data, we first examine how public recognition as an A-type taxpayer affects trade at the relationship level between Chinese suppliers and U.S. customers. This analysis triangulates our baseline supplier–destination results using an independent data source and a different unit of analysis. We then decompose the effect into extensive and intensive margins to provide further insights into how trade relationships evolve around the public designation of A-type taxpayers.

We construct a panel of Chinese supplier–U.S. customer pairs that engage in at least one trade between 2012 and 2017, and assign zero shipments to years in which a given pair does not transact. This balanced panel allows us to track both the formation and the continuation of relationships over time. We estimate the following regression:

$$Container_{i,j,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Treat_i \times Post_t + Controls_{i,t-1} + \eta_{i,j} + \sigma_t + \epsilon_{i,j,t} , \quad (2)$$

where  $Container_{i,j,t}$  is the number of containers imported by U.S. customer  $j$  from Chinese supplier  $i$  in year  $t$ . We rely on container counts rather than shipment values because U.S. bills of lading do not require importers to report transaction values (Flaen et al. 2023).<sup>22</sup>  $Post_t$  is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014.  $Treat_i$  is an indicator equal to one if Chinese supplier  $i$  is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise.

We include supplier–customer fixed effects to absorb all time-invariant attributes of a given trading pair that could affect the level of shipments. We also include year fixed effects to capture aggregate shocks common in a given year. As reported in column (1) of Table 7, the coefficient on  $Treat \times Post$  is 0.075 and is statistically significant at the 1% level. This implies an increase of about 7.8% ( $= e^{0.075} - 1$ ) in trade per supplier–customer pair for Chinese suppliers that receive the public recognition of A-type taxpayers.

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<sup>22</sup> Given that the outcome is a non-negative count variable, we estimate equation (2) using Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood (Cohn, Liu, and Wardlaw 2022).

We then separate the effect into extensive and intensive margins by (i) replacing the dependent variable with an indicator  $I(\text{New supplier})$  for the newly formed relationship in year  $t$ , and (ii) replacing the dependent variable with an indicator  $I(\text{Increase purchase})$  for relationship with an expansion in trade volume from year  $t-1$  to  $t$  and restricting to the sample with pre-existing relationship, following Bisetti et al. (2026). For the extensive margin, column (2) suggests that the probability of forming a new relationship rises by approximately 7.8% ( $= e^{0.075} - 1$ ). For the intensive margin, column (3) suggests a 5.2% ( $= e^{0.051} - 1$ ) increase in trade among ongoing relationships when the supplier receives the A-type designation. Among treated relationships that experience an increase in trade from the pre- to the post-period, 56% of the growth is attributable to the formation of new relationships, while the remaining 44% reflects the expansion of existing relationships. The pattern across estimated extensive and intensive margins effects is consistent with public A-type recognition easing the formation of relationships when prior transaction history is thin, while offering only a modest incremental signal for partners that already possess private information from repeated interactions.

## **5.2 Downstream Effects on U.S. Customers' Supply Chains**

Having documented that the public designation of A-type firms facilitates cross-border trade by enhancing the credibility of supplier information, we next examine whether such disclosure generates efficiency gains for the relationship and the buyer. When buyers face difficulties in screening potential suppliers *ex ante* or monitoring them *ex post*, trade relationships are more likely to dissolve (Rauch and Watson 2003). By mitigating these information frictions, the disclosure of A-type status reduces supplier–customer mismatches, thereby lowering supply chain disruption risk. This reduction in disruption risk, in turn, decreases customers' supply chain management costs and enhances their ability to secure inputs necessary to meet demand. We therefore expect that customers with greater reliance on Chinese input markets experience improvements in supply chain coordination and procurement

efficiency following the disclosure shock.

To test these predictions, we draw on Panjiva’s U.S. import data and construct a sample of U.S. customers during 2012–2017. We then estimate the following DID specification, using a continuous treatment variable:

$$Outcome_{j,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 China\ Exposure_i \times Post_t + Controls_{j,t-1} + \eta_j + \sigma_t + \epsilon_{j,t}, \quad (3)$$

where  $China\ Exposure_{j,t}$  is defined as the share of customer  $j$ ’s distinct suppliers located in China during the pre-disclosure period (2012–2014), capturing the customer’s reliance on Chinese suppliers for input procurement and thus its exposure to the 2015 disclosure reform.  $Post$  is an indicator equal to one for years 2015–2017 and zero for years 2012–2014. All specifications include customer and year fixed effects.

We begin by examining the impact on the matching quality of supplier relationships. Specifically, we construct *Termination Risk*, defined as the fraction of existing suppliers that are terminated by the customer in the following three years. In essence, this measure captures the quality of the match: higher matching quality predicts longer relationship duration and, consequently, a lower risk of future termination. Column (1) of Table 8 shows that  $China\ Exposure \times Post$  is negatively associated with *Termination Risk* (coef. =  $-0.009$ ; t-stat =  $-5.54$ ). An inter-quartile increase in  $China\ Exposure$  (0.667) is associated with a 1.3% reduction in termination risk, relative to its sample mean ( $= 0.667 \times 0.009 / 0.447$ ). The result suggests that U.S. customers with greater reliance on Chinese suppliers face a lower risk of supply chain disruption following the disclosure, implying an improved matching quality.

Next, we examine the impact on supply chain management costs, proxied by a customer’s selling, general, and administrative expenses scaled by sales (SG&A).<sup>23</sup> Screening

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<sup>23</sup> For the analyses of customer firm performance, we focus on the public firms to construct measures of operating performance. We also control for the lagged value of *Customer Size*, *Customer PPE*, *Customer Inventory*, and *Customer Operating Income* in the regression model.

new vendors, qualifying production, and monitoring compliance are all buyer-side activities that draw on overhead resources. A standardized, government-verified compliance signal may reduce search and verification intensity, thereby lowering these costs. Consistent with this prediction, column (2) of Table 8 shows that *China Exposure*  $\times$  *Post* is negative and statistically significant at the 1% level (coef. =  $-0.006$ ; t-stat =  $-2.75$ ). An inter-quartile increase in *China Exposure* (0.667) is associated with a 0.4% reduction in SG&A to sales ratio, corresponding to 1.9% of its sample mean ( $= 0.667 \times 0.006 / 0.215$ ).

Finally, we assess whether the improvement in supply chain stability translates into greater inventory management efficiency. Stable supplier relationships enhance demand forecasting and replenishment planning, reducing the need for precautionary stock. If public recognition stabilizes sourcing from Chinese suppliers, U.S. buyers may operate with leaner inventories. We measure inventory efficiency using *Inventory Turnover*, defined as the ratio of cost of goods sold to average inventory. Column (3) of Table 8 shows that *China Exposure*  $\times$  *Post* is positive and statistically significant at the 1% level (coef. =  $0.666$ ; t-stat =  $3.00$ ), indicating that the disclosure improves inventory management efficiency. An inter-quartile increase in *China Exposure* (0.667) is associated with a 5.9% increase in the inventory turnover ratio relative to its sample mean ( $= 0.667 \times 0.666 / 7.485$ ).

Overall, the evidence suggests that the disclosure of aggregated, firm-level administrative data enhances cross-border trade efficiency and generates positive spillovers for downstream customer firms.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusions**

This paper examines the role of government-managed administrative disclosure in reducing information frictions in international trade. Exploiting the 2015 nationwide public release of China's A-type taxpayer ratings, we provide evidence that the public recognition of tax compliance facilitates firms' exports. Treated exporters experience sizable increases in

trade, with a larger impact on the formation of new foreign relationships. Consistent with the reduced information frictions mechanism, the gains are stronger among smaller and younger firms, private firms lacking audited financial statements, and firms headquartered in regions where financial reporting is perceived to be less credible. Within-firm analyses show that the disclosure effect is most pronounced in destinations with fewer institutionalized information channels and limited ethnic Chinese presence. Overall, these results suggest that the disclosure affects cross-border trade through alleviating information frictions, and the effect cannot be attributed solely to the administrative privilege conferred on high-compliance taxpayers.

Beyond export growth, we document efficiency gains for downstream buyers. U.S. importers sourcing more heavily from China experience reductions in supply chain disruption risk, lower SG&A expenses, and improvements in inventory turnover following the disclosure. These results indicate that the release of aggregated administrative data not only improves supplier–customer matching, but also generates positive spillovers along supply chains.

Taken together, our findings highlight the economic importance of administrative disclosure as a policy tool. By issuing a standardized and credible signal based on data already collected for regulatory purposes, governments can enhance transparency at minimal incremental cost, particularly in settings where small and private firms face limited capacity to credibly disclose financial information. More broadly, our evidence suggests that administrative disclosure can complement traditional financial reporting regimes and ultimately improve the efficiency of international markets.

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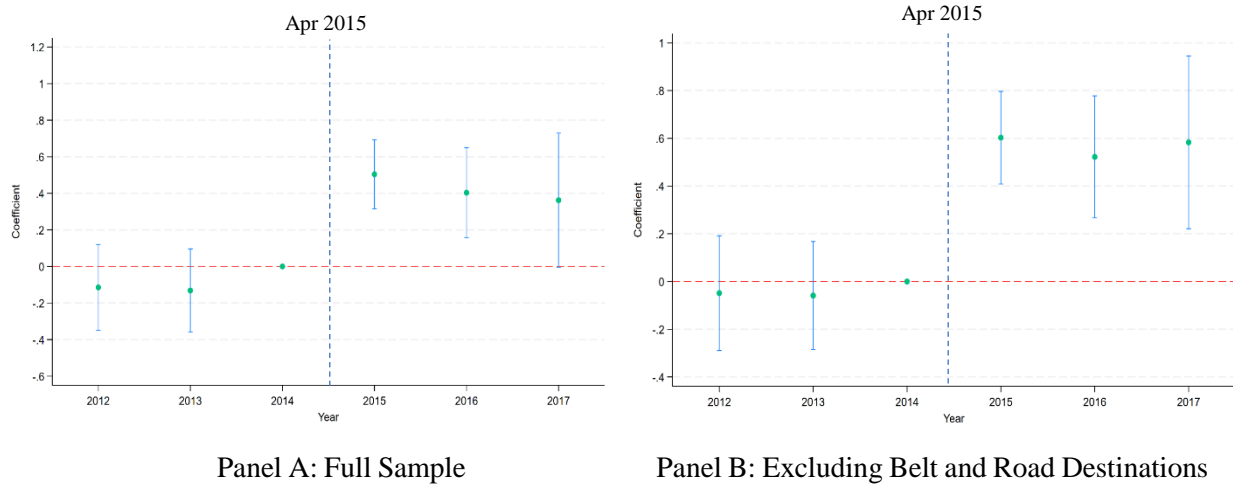
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## Appendix A: Variable Definitions

Variable	Definition
<b>Main variables</b>	
<i>Export</i>	The ratio of a firm's export value to its lagged total sales, multiplied by 100.
<i>Container</i>	The number of raw shipping containers imported by a U.S. customer from a Chinese supplier in a given year, based on U.S. customs records.
<i>Treat</i>	Indicator variable equal to one if the firm was publicly disclosed as an A-rated taxpayer in 2015, and zero otherwise.
<i>Post</i>	Indicator variable equal to one for years after 2015, and zero otherwise.
<b>Variables in cross-sectional analyses</b>	
<i>Small</i>	Indicator variable equal to one if the firm's average total assets from 2012 to 2014 are below the sample median, and zero otherwise.
<i>Young</i>	Indicator variable equal to one if the firm's establishment year is later than the sample median, and zero otherwise.
<i>Private</i>	Indicator variable equal to one if the firm has no public securities issuance prior to 2015, and zero otherwise.
<i>High Restate</i>	Indicator variable equal to one if the firm is located in a province with an above-median incidence of financial restatements due to accounting irregularities during 2012–2014, and zero otherwise.
<i>No FTA</i>	Indicator variable equal to one for destination countries or regions without a free trade agreement with China in place before 2015, and zero otherwise.
<i>Weak Ethnic Network</i>	Indicator variable equal to one for destinations not among the top 15 jurisdictions by the share of overseas Chinese in the resident population and zero otherwise.
<b>Control variables</b>	
<i>Size</i>	Natural logarithm of total assets.
<i>Leverage</i>	The ratio of total debts to total assets.
<i>Cash</i>	The ratio of cash to total assets.
<i>ROS</i>	The ratio of operating income to total sales.
<b>Variables in U.S. customer-level analyses</b>	
<i>Termination Risk</i>	The fraction of existing suppliers that are terminated by the customer in the subsequent three year.
<i>SG&amp;A</i>	The ratio of the customer's selling, general, and administrative expenses to sales.
<i>Inventory Turnover</i>	The ratio of the customer's cost of goods sold to average inventory.
<i>China Exposure</i>	The share of the customer's distinct suppliers located in China during the pre-disclosure period (2012–2014).
<i>Customer Size</i>	Natural logarithm of the customer's total assets.
<i>Customer PPE</i>	The customer's net property, plant, and equipment scaled by total assets.
<i>Customer Inventory</i>	The customer's inventory scaled by total assets.
<i>Customer Operating Income</i>	The customer's operating income to total sales.

### Figure 1: Dynamic Effects of Public Disclosure of A-type Taxpayer

This figure plots the estimated dynamic effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on firm exports, based on an event-study specification. The outcome variable is firm-destination jurisdiction exports scaled by lagged total sales. The year 2014 is omitted and serves as the benchmark year. Panel A performs the analyses using the full sample as in column (2) of Table 2. Panel B performs the analyses using the sample excluding destination jurisdictions that are part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative as in column (5) of Table 3 Panel B. Each point represents the coefficient on an indicator for the event year relative to 2012, and vertical bars denote 95% confidence intervals.



## Table 1: Summary Statistics

This table presents descriptive statistics for our sample. Panel A presents descriptive statistics for the variables used in our main analysis. Panel B reports the number of observations by industry and treatment status. Panel C reports the number of observations by firm location and treatment status. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. All variables are defined in Appendix A.

### Panel A: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	P25	P50	P75
Export	2,471,341	7.089	20.193	0.134	0.704	3.448
Treat	2,471,341	0.335	0.472	0	0	1
Post	2,471,341	0.406	0.491	0	0	1
Age	2,471,341	12.002	6.263	8	11	16
Private	2,471,341	0.960	0.195	1	1	1
No FTA	2,471,341	0.761	0.426	1	1	1
Weak Ethnic Network	2,471,341	0.760	0.427	1	1	1
Size	2,471,341	18.496	1.957	17.173	18.458	19.786
Leverage	2,471,341	0.618	0.292	0.406	0.640	0.838
Cash	2,471,341	0.150	0.152	0.042	0.099	0.205
ROS	2,471,341	0.151	0.116	0.069	0.128	0.203

**Table 1: Summary Statistics (Continued)****Panel B: Distribution of Treated Firms by Industry**

Industry	Full Sample	Treat=1	
	Unique Firms	Unique Firms	Percentage (%)
Agricultural & Sideline Foods Processing	2,273	398	17.5
Food Production	1,202	337	28.0
Textile Industry	4,327	1,069	24.7
Clothes, Shoes & Hat Manufacture	5,810	1,041	17.9
Leather, Furs, Down & Related Products	3,069	459	15.0
Timber, Bamboo, Cane, Palm Fiber & Straw Products	1,551	169	10.9
Furniture Manufacturing	1,487	288	19.4
Papermaking & Paper Products	764	230	30.1
Printing & Record Medium Reproduction	518	167	32.2
Cultural, Educational & Sports Articles Production	2,258	447	19.8
Raw Chemical Material & Chemical Products	3,469	1,140	32.9
Medical & Pharmaceutical Products	1,042	367	35.2
Chemical Fiber Products	342	85	24.9
Rubber and Plastic Products	5,302	1,390	26.2
Non-metal Mineral Products	2,371	621	26.2
Smelting & Pressing of Ferrous Metals	734	267	36.4
Smelting & Pressing of Non-ferrous Metals	928	303	32.7
Metal Products	5,145	1,267	24.6
General Equipment Manufacturing	5,583	1,702	30.5
Special Equipment Manufacturing	3,860	1,195	31.0
Motors Manufacturing	2,949	1,009	34.2
Other Transport Equipment Manufacturing	1,048	358	34.2
Electric Machines & Apparatuses Manufacturing	4,307	1,432	33.2
Communication Equipment, Computer & Other Electronic Equipment	7,123	2,363	33.2
Instruments Manufacture	1,418	401	28.3
Other Manufactures	5,141	1,080	21.0
Other Industries	24,317	3,558	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>98,338</b>	<b>23,143</b>	

**Table 1: Summary Statistics (Continued)****Panel C: Distribution of Treated Firms by Firm Location**

Province	Full sample	Treat=1	
	Unique Firms	Unique Firms	Percentage (%)
Anhui	2,140	370	17.3
Beijing	3,135	878	28.0
Chongqing	901	140	15.5
Fujian	5,134	1,023	19.9
Gansu	200	21	10.5
Guangdong	16,999	5,452	32.1
Guangxi	1,112	111	10.0
Guizhou	133	21	15.8
Hainan	166	5	3.0
Hebei	4,355	165	3.8
Heilongjiang	629	72	11.4
Henan	2,186	529	24.2
Hubei	1,415	213	15.1
Hunan	1,144	103	9.0
Inner Mongolia	362	16	4.4
Jiangsu	13,840	4,670	33.7
Jiangxi	1,183	178	15.0
Jilin	655	22	3.4
Liaoning	4,616	355	7.7
Ningxia	144	28	19.4
Qinghai	48	0	0.0
Shaanxi	705	171	24.3
Shandong	11,666	2,184	18.7
Shanghai	8,635	1,752	20.3
Shanxi	509	43	8.4
Sichuan	932	329	35.3
Tianjin	1,899	1,069	56.3
Tibet	9	1	11.1
Yunnan	503	37	7.4
Zhejiang	12,983	3,185	24.5
Total	98,338	23,143	

**Table 2: Public Disclosure of A-type Taxpayers and Exports**

This table presents the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on exports using a firm-destination jurisdiction-year sample. The dependent variable is *Export*, the ratio of export from the firm to the destination, scaled by lagged total sales. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. Column (1) reports baseline difference-in-differences estimates without firm-level controls. Column (2) adds firm-level controls. All specifications are estimated using OLS and include firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

Dependent Variable	(1) Export	(2) Export
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.501***</b> <b>(5.33)</b>	<b>0.527***</b> <b>(6.34)</b>
Size		-5.783*** (-13.75)
Leverage		-0.876*** (-2.63)
Cash		0.056 (0.10)
ROS		12.112*** (7.65)
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.746	0.758

**Table 3: The Effects of Confounding Factors**

This table reports sensitivity tests for the baseline analyses on the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on exports, using a firm-destination jurisdiction-year sample. The dependent variable is *Export*, the ratio of export from the firm to the destination, scaled by lagged total sales. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. Panel A addresses the potential impacts of confounding firm fundamental changes. In column (1), treatment firms are required to have limited changes in the first assessment of total assets, total liabilities, and total tax payments, with percentage changes constrained to fall within a 10% range. In column (2), *Treat* is defined based on predicted treatment status, where firms are classified as treated ( $Treat=1$ ) if their predicted probability of receiving an A-type rating in the first assessment year exceeds the sample mean. In column (3), treated firms are matched to control firms using propensity score matching via nearest neighbor on common support without replacement. All columns in Panel A include firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. Panel B addresses the potential impacts of confounding events. Columns (1)-(4) use alternative fixed effect structures: columns (1)-(3) include firm-by-jurisdiction fixed effect along with each of province-by-year fixed effects, industry-by-year fixed effects, and jurisdiction-by-year fixed effects, respectively; and column (4) includes all these fixed effects simultaneously. Column (5) includes firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects and excludes from the sample destination countries that are part of China's Belt and Road Initiative as of 2017. All specifications are estimated using OLS. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

**Panel A: Confounding Firm Fundamental Changes**

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent Variable	Export	Export	Export
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.502***</b> (2.95)	<b>0.725***</b> (8.35)	<b>0.401***</b> (4.86)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,526,543	2,107,779	1,714,359
Adjusted $R^2$	0.756	0.759	0.775

**Panel B: Confounding Events**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dependent Variable	Export	Export	Export	Export	Export
<b>Treat × Post</b>	<b>0.510***</b> (5.85)	<b>0.463***</b> (5.83)	<b>0.466***</b> (5.62)	<b>0.393***</b> (4.73)	<b>0.609***</b> (7.02)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province-Year FE	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Industry-Year FE	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Jurisdiction-Year FE	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Year FE	No	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,317	2,471,341	2,471,317	1,599,629
Adjusted $R^2$	0.759	0.759	0.759	0.760	0.776

**Table 4: Cross-sectional Test: Reputation Capital**

This table reports the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on exports, conditional on the reputation capital of exporting firms. We use a firm-destination jurisdiction-year sample. The dependent variable is *Export*, the ratio of export from the firm to the destination, scaled by lagged total sales. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. *Small* is an indicator equal to one if the firm's average total assets in the pre-period are below the sample median, and zero otherwise. *Young* is an indicator equal to one if the firm's establishment year is later than the sample median, and zero otherwise. Both columns are estimated using OLS regressions. Both columns include firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. The coefficients associated with the interactions between *Post* and the partition variables are omitted for brevity. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	(1)	(2)
Dependent Variable	Export	Export
Treat×Post	0.241** (2.42)	0.356*** (3.53)
<b>Treat×Post×Small</b>	<b>0.399**</b> <b>(2.42)</b>	
<b>Treat×Post×Young</b>		<b>0.347**</b> <b>(2.06)</b>
Size	-5.771*** (-13.71)	-5.769*** (-13.60)
Leverage	-0.859*** (-2.58)	-0.873*** (-2.62)
Cash	0.083 (0.15)	0.063 (0.11)
ROS	12.111*** (7.65)	12.108*** (7.65)
Post×Partition Var.	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.758	0.758

**Table 5: Cross-sectional Test: Availability of Credible Financial Disclosure**

This table reports the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on exports, conditional on the availability and credibility of financial statements. We use a firm-destination jurisdiction-year sample. The dependent variable is *Export*, the ratio of export from the firm to the destination scaled by lagged total sales. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. *Private* is an indicator equal to one if the firm has no public securities issuance prior to 2015, and zero otherwise. *High Restate* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is located in a province with an above-median incidence of financial restatements due to accounting irregularities during 2012–2014, and zero otherwise. Both columns are estimated using OLS regressions. Both columns include firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. The coefficients associated with the interactions between *Post* and the partition variables are omitted for brevity. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	(1)	(2)
Dependent Variable	Export	Export
Treat×Post	-0.447 (-1.01)	0.242** (2.07)
<b>Treat×Post×Private</b>	<b>0.956**</b> <b>(2.13)</b>	
<b>Treat×Post× High Restate</b>		<b>0.636***</b> <b>(3.72)</b>
Size	-5.797*** (-13.78)	-5.783*** (-13.73)
Leverage	-0.884*** (-2.65)	-0.861*** (-2.58)
Cash	0.080 (0.14)	0.073 (0.13)
ROS	12.135*** (7.66)	12.101*** (7.64)
Post×Partition Var.	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.758	0.758

**Table 6: Information Channel versus Government-conferred Privileges**

This table reports the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on exports, conditional on the state ownership of exporting firms (Panel A) and the availability of alternative information channels in customer countries (Panel B). We use a firm-destination jurisdiction-year sample. The dependent variable is *Export*, the ratio of export from the firm to the destination, scaled by lagged total sales. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. In Panel A, *SOE* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is a state-owned enterprise, and zero otherwise. In Panel B, *No FTA* is an indicator equal to one for destinations without a free trade agreement with China in place before 2015, and zero otherwise. *Weak Ethnic Network* is an indicator equal to one for destinations not among the top 15 jurisdictions by the share of overseas Chinese in the resident population and zero otherwise. All specifications are estimated using OLS regressions. Panel A includes firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. Panel B includes firm-jurisdiction and firm-year fixed effects. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

**Panel A: State Owned Firms**

Dependent Variable	(1) Export
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.526***</b> (6.56)
<b>Treat×Post×SOE</b>	<b>-0.153</b> (-0.18)
Post×SOE	0.911 (1.30)
Size	-5.780*** (-13.77)
Leverage	-0.875*** (-2.63)
Cash	0.054 (0.09)
ROS	12.132*** (7.66)
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes
Year FE	Yes
Observations	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.758

**Table 6: Information Channel versus Government-conferred Privileges (Continued)****Panel B: Within-firm Heterogeneity: Information Access of Customer Countries**

	(1)	(2)
Dependent Variable	Export	Export
<b>Treat×Post×No FTA</b>	<b>0.147**</b> <b>(2.23)</b>	
<b>Treat×Post×Weak Ethnic Network</b>		<b>0.147**</b> <b>(2.29)</b>
Post×Partition Var.	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes
Firm-Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.878	0.878

**Table 7: Effects at the Supplier–Customer Pair Level**

This table reports the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on trade outcomes at the supplier-customer relationship level. We use a relationship-year sample covering relationships between U.S. customers and Chinese suppliers, sourced from the U.S. customs data. In column (1), the dependent variable is *Container*, the number of shipping containers imported by a U.S. customer from a Chinese supplier in a given year. In column (2), the dependent variable is *I(New supplier)*, a dummy equal to one for a relationship newly formed in year  $t$ . In column (3), the dependent variable is *I(Increase purchase)*, a dummy equal to one for a relationship with trade growth from  $t-1$  to  $t$ , and we require the relationship to exist in the pre-period. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. All columns are estimated using Poisson regressions. All regressions include firm-customer and year fixed effects. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the supplier firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* respectively indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent Variable	Container	I(New Supplier)	I(Increase Purchase)
Sample	Full	Full	Existing Supplier
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.075***</b> <b>(2.64)</b>	<b>0.075**</b> <b>(2.48)</b>	<b>0.051*</b> <b>(1.73)</b>
Size	0.194*** (8.38)	0.204*** (8.49)	0.099*** (5.74)
Leverage	-0.026 (-0.67)	-0.012 (-0.21)	0.080* (1.83)
Cash	0.151** (2.21)	-0.026 (-0.31)	0.124* (1.85)
ROS	0.216* (1.94)	-0.035 (-0.25)	0.170 (1.24)
Firm-Customer FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	477,210	352,942	310,671
Pseudo $R^2$	0.631	0.012	0.107

**Table 8: Effects on Customers' Supply Chains**

This table reports the downstream effects of the disclosure of A-type firms on customers' supply chains. We use a firm-year sample for U.S. importers in Panjiva. In column (1), the dependent variable is *Termination Risk*, defined as the fraction of existing suppliers that are terminated by the customer in the subsequent three years. In columns (2) and (3), we use the public firms in order to calculate operating efficiency measures. We require the public firms to be registered and have their headquarters in the United States. In column (2), the dependent variable is *SG&A*, defined as the selling, general, and administrative expenses scaled by sales. In column (3), the dependent variable is *Inventory Turnover*, defined as the ratio of cost of goods sold to average inventory. *China Exposure* is defined as the share of the U.S. customer distinct suppliers located in China during the pre-disclosure period (2012–2014). *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015–2017 and zero for years 2012–2014. All columns are estimated using OLS regressions. All columns include customer and year fixed effects. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the customer firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent Variable	Termination Risk	SG&A	Inventory Turnover
<b>China Exposure×Post</b>	<b>-0.009***</b> <b>(-5.54)</b>	<b>-0.006***</b> <b>(-2.75)</b>	<b>0.666***</b> <b>(3.00)</b>
Customer Controls	No	Yes	Yes
Customer FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,910,410	27,360	27,360
Adjusted $R^2$	0.304	0.934	0.952

# Online Appendix to

## The Real Effects of Administrative Disclosure on Cross-Border Trade

Guoman She

Ricky Yao

Le Zhao

### Table of Contents

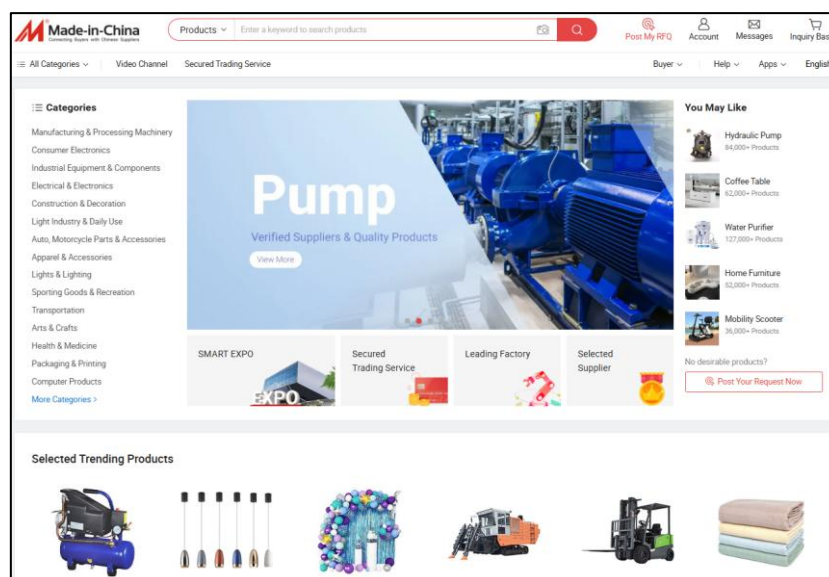
A. Anecdotal Evidence .....	1
A.1 Supplier-Side Signaling in Cross-Border Trade.....	1
A.2 Use of Tax Compliance Rating in Cross-Border Due Diligence .....	3
B. Institutional Background of The A-Type Taxpayer Disclosure Policy.....	5
B.1 Timeline of the Rollout of the Tax Rating System.....	5
B.2 The Framework of the Tax Credit Rating System.....	6
B.3. Public Dissemination of the A-Type Taxpayer Status .....	7
C. Robustness Tests .....	9
C.1 Matching.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
C.2 Alternative Export Measure.....	9
C.3 Alternative Standard Errors Clustering .....	9
C.4 Staggered Treatment Timing .....	10
D. Additional Figures and Tables .....	11
Figure D1: Export Intensity by A-type Taxpayer Status.....	11
Table D1: Sample Selection.....	12
Table D2: Prediction of A-Type Firm Designation .....	13
Table D3: Sample of Matched Suppliers .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table D4: Alternative Export Measure .....	15
Table D5: Alternative Standard Error Clustering .....	16
Table D6: Stacked DID at Relationship Level Based on U.S. Import Data .....	17

## A. Anecdotal Evidence

### A.1 Supplier-Side Signaling in Cross-Border Trade

To provide anecdotal evidence on how taxpayer credit ratings are used as credibility signals in international trade, we examine whether Chinese exporters voluntarily disclose their taxpayer status on business-to-business (B2B) platforms commonly used by foreign buyers. Specifically, we focus on Made-in-China.com, a long-standing, multilingual Business-to-Business marketplace founded in 1998 that connects overseas buyers with Chinese suppliers. The platform hosts more than 84 million product listings, and independent traffic estimates indicate roughly 19 million monthly visits, placing it among the most frequently used China-sourcing portals by international buyers.<sup>24</sup>

**Figure A1: Homepage of Made-in-China.com**



Using targeted keyword searches on the platform, we identify supplier or product pages that explicitly reference firms' taxpayer credit status. We find that export-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises prominently advertise an "A-level taxpayer" designation in their company profiles and/or product pages. These disclosures are often displayed alongside claims

<sup>24</sup> Source: <https://www.similarweb.com/website/made-in-china.com/#overview>. Accessed August, 2025.

about product quality, production capabilities, or innovation credentials, suggesting that firms view taxpayer status as a complementary signal of reliability and trustworthiness for foreign counterparties. Below, we provide several representative examples. For ease of exposition, we reproduce relevant excerpts from supplier pages and add emphasis to references to A-type taxpayer status.

1. Zhongshan Zhanhong Adhesive Products Co., Ltd.

- Year of Establishment: 2009
- Number of Employees: N/A
- Offering: Packaging & Printing

**Company Profile:** ...The company has more than 10 years of deep technical foundation in product manufacturing and application, and the core technicians have more than 20 years of experience. The enterprise is managed and developed in good faith according to law, and has been awarded "Guangdong Province **Type-A Taxpayer**" by the state organs and "gold customer" and "star quality customer" by various banks. This is an affirmation to us...

2. Hubei Skega Rubber Products Co., Ltd.

- Year of Establishment: 2007
- Number of Employees: N/A
- Offering: Auto, Motorcycle Parts & Accessories, Tools & Hardware

**Company Profile:** ...At present, it has developed into a high-tech enterprise in Hubei Province, a AAA credit enterprise and **Type-A Taxpayer**...

3. Linqi Jiaying Plastic Co., Ltd.

- Year of Establishment: 2006
- Number of Employees: 79
- Offering: Plastic Products

**Company Profile:** The company has a strong technical foundation of 20 years in the manufacturing and application of products, with core technicians having over 20 years of experience. The enterprise has been awarded the title of **Type-A Taxpayer** for its lawful and honest management and development...

4. Guangzhou Bedford Electric Equipment Co., Ltd.

- Year of Establishment: 2007
- Number of Employees: 142
- Offering: Inverter; Controller; Multi-Function Energy-Saving Controller; Water Supply Equipment

**Company Profile:** [How can I trust you?] We are a certified high-tech enterprise in China. Our company has been audited and approved ISO, CE and are a China Honest Management Enterprise, **Type-A Taxpayer**.

## 5. Qingdao Fineyear Industry Co., Ltd.

- Year of Establishment: 2012
- Number of Employees: N/A
- Offering: Rubber Track Machine, Tire Machine, Belt Machine, Rubber Machine, Kneader

**Company Profile:** Qingdao Fineyear Rubber & Plastic Co., Ltd. is located in the beautiful coastal city of Qingdao west coast, is a collection of scientific research, development, production, installation, commissioning services and sales as one of the shot blasting machine, shot blasting machine track and shot blasting machine accessories production enterprises. From 2015 to 2020, it has been rated as a **Type-A Taxpayer** by the State Administration of Taxation for six consecutive years. The company adopts a strict management model, has a rich industry experience of the staff, engineers, with a good scientific research foundation, experimental conditions and production base...

### A.2 Use of Tax Compliance Rating in Cross-Border Due Diligence

To further illustrate how tax compliance ratings are used in practice to assess supplier credibility, we examine practitioner-oriented guidance on conducting due diligence for China-facing transactions. We identify two independent sources that explicitly recommend the use of taxpayer rating status by foreign buyers as a practical tool for screening potential Chinese partners, especially when conventional financial disclosures are limited or unavailable.

CJO Global, a consulting firm specializing in risk management for China-related cross-border transactions, highlights tax compliance ratings as practical tools for assessing whether a Chinese supplier is actively operating and generating revenue. In its advisory guidance to foreign buyers, the firm notes that relying solely on on-site inspections can be costly or logistically challenging. As an alternative, it recommends using a firm's tax compliance rating, which is evaluated annually by the Chinese tax authorities, as a proxy for ongoing business activity and adherence to tax obligations. The advisory explicitly endorses this rating as a screening criterion, emphasizing that a top rating signals not only tax compliance but also normal and sustained operational status.

GWBMA, a professional services firm providing one-stop business and legal advisory services for international clients looking to do business with China, explicitly frames the tax

compliance rating as a practical screening tool when transparent financial disclosures are unavailable. The firm emphasizes that publicly accessible audited financial statements are generally unavailable for most non-listed Chinese firms due to local reporting norms and statutory practices. As a result, foreign clients often find conventional verification or due diligence reports to contain limited financial detail. In response, GWBMA advises supplementing standard checks with alternative indicators, such as registered capital, operational history, and, critically, tax compliance rating status, to triangulate a potential partner's credibility.

Collectively, these advisor sources demonstrate that practitioners actively advocate for the use of tax compliance ratings and related indicators as part of supplier screening in cross-border trade, particularly where traditional financial information is inaccessible or complex to interpret.

## B. Institutional Background of The A-Type Taxpayer Disclosure Policy

This section provides institutional background on the A-type taxpayer disclosure policy, including its rollout timeline, rating assessment framework, and public dissemination of A-type taxpayer status.

### B.1 Timeline of the Rollout of the Tax Rating System

Table B1 summarizes the key milestones in the rollout of China's taxpayer rating system. The State Taxation Administration (STA) introduced the grading framework in the second half of 2014 and designated the 2014 financial year the first assessment period. The STA initiated the first public disclosure of A-type taxpayers in April 2015. This disclosure regime was subsequently reinforced in July 2016 through the introduction of a coordinated incentive package that granted A-type taxpayers preferential administrative treatment across multiple government agencies, including expedited customs clearance, prioritized VAT refund processing, reduced inspection frequency, and preferential access to selected government services.

**Table B1. Key Milestones in the Rollout of the Tax Credit Rating System**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Document / Action</b>	<b>Key Content</b>
July 4, 2014	<i>Measures for Tax Credit Management</i>	Established the A–D tax grading framework.
August 25, 2014	<i>Tax Credit Evaluation Indicators and Method</i>	Defined detailed scoring indicators and evaluation methodology.
September 12, 2014	<i>Official Guideline on the Credit Evaluation System</i>	Provided background, objectives, and design rationale.
April 2015	Public Disclosure of A-Type Taxpayers	First public release of A-type taxpayer identities based on 2014 assessments.
July 12, 2016	<i>Notice on Issuing the Memorandum of Cooperation on the Implementation of Joint Incentive Measures for A-Type Taxpayers with Excellent Tax Credit</i>	Introduced a package of 41 incentive measures for A-type taxpayers, including expedited customs clearance, prioritized VAT refund processing, reduced inspection frequency, and preferential access to selected government services.

## **B.2 The Framework of the Tax Credit Rating System**

The STA evaluates taxpayers' compliance using a grid-based credit rating framework that incorporates a comprehensive set of 95 indicators across all major dimensions of tax administration. These indicators capture taxpayers' behavior in the filing, payment, reporting, and record-keeping processes, as well as their cooperation with tax authorities and other government agencies. The framework aims to provide a holistic assessment of a taxpayer's compliance history and credibility within China's tax system. Specifically, the indicators cover the following areas of tax administration:

- Compliance in filing value-added tax (VAT) and income tax returns
- Accuracy and truthfulness of tax incentive and deduction claims
- Timeliness of tax payments and settlement of arrears or other dues
- Fulfilment of tax withholding and remittance obligations
- Accuracy of taxpayer registration and information maintenance
- Preparation and retention of accounting and tax records
- Management and use of VAT invoices
- Cooperation with tax investigations, audits, and information requests
- Engagement in tax avoidance or evasion behaviors
- Disclosure of business status changes that affect tax obligations
- Consistency between reported tax information and data obtained from banks, customs, and business registries

To quantify compliance, the STA applies a demerit-based scoring system. Each of the 95 indicators is assigned a score ranging from 1 to 11, which is deducted from an initial score of 100 depending on the severity of non-compliance in each category. The resulting total score determines the taxpayer's annual credit grade.

**Table B2. Scoring and Rating Thresholds**

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Score Range</b>
<b>A</b>	≥ 90 points
<b>B</b>	70–89 points
<b>C</b>	40–69 points
<b>D</b>	< 40 points

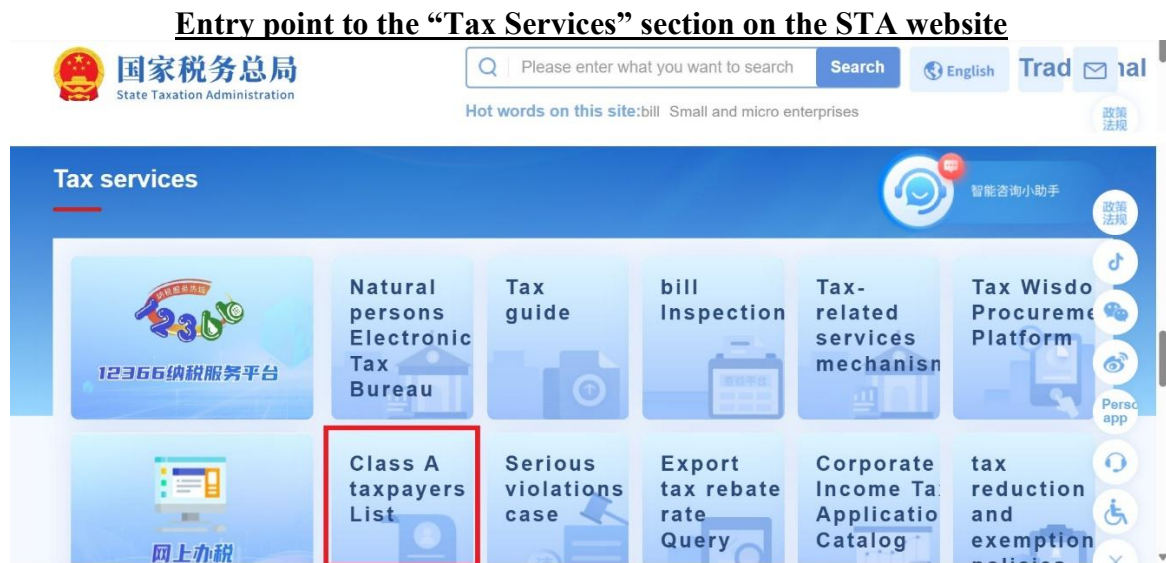
In addition to the numerical scoring system, the STA identifies a set of “serious dishonest behaviors” that automatically trigger the lowest rating (Grade D), regardless of the total score. Such behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Falsifying applications for tax incentives or refunds
- Forging or illegally issuing VAT invoices
- Failing to settle unpaid taxes following administrative adjustments
- Refusing to cooperate with tax authorities or obstructing enforcement
- Evading taxes above specified monetary or proportional thresholds

### **B.3. Public Dissemination of the A-Type Taxpayer Status**

The STA publicly discloses the list of A-level tax credit taxpayers on its official website. The list is accessible through the “Tax Services” section of the STA’s homepage. Figure B1 illustrate the navigation path from the STA homepage to the final list view.

**Figure B1. Public Dissemination of A-Level Taxpayer Status via the STA Website**



**Public list of A-level tax credit taxpayers**

纳税信用A级纳税人名单公布栏  
Public List of A-Level Tax Credit Taxpayers

**查询**

纳税人识别号:  纳税人名称:  评价年度:

请输入纳税人识别号  请输入纳税人名称  2014  请输入验证码

纳税人识别号(统一社会信用代码)	纳税人名称	评价年度	主管税务机关
91310104133732133Q	上海航天动力科技工程有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市徐汇区税务局
913100007405535675	上海市南电力(集团)有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市闵行区税务局
91310114662491742G	上海鹏程橡胶骨架材料有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市嘉定区税务局
91310115607413696X	上海井上百褶服装有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市浦东新区税务局
91310105132902364G	上海质量体系审核中心	2014	国家税务总局上海市长宁区税务局
91310109688717674B	上海梦曼物流有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市虹口区税务局
91310115577499176U	上海有心企业发展有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市浦东新区税务局
	上海晓游报关有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市青浦区税务局
91310112832479931M	上海中业康秀实业发展有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市闵行区税务局
913100007340827540	萨瓦尼尼国际贸易(上海)有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市浦东新区税务局
91310112672680678U	上海欧切斯实业有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市闵行区税务局
91310109133140955G	上海家化销售有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市虹口区税务局
9131011063039506XC	上海明乐食品有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市杨浦区税务局
91310115580628629T	上海智霖环保工程有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市浦东新区税务局
91310113133443403Y	上海月月潮储运有限公司	2014	国家税务总局上海市宝山区税务局

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Beyond the STA website, this information is also integrated into firms’ broader credit profiles maintained within the state’s public corporate credit information repository. It is further disseminated through commercial enterprise information platforms widely used in China, enabling businesses and financial institutions to incorporate taxpayer credit data into their routine credit assessments, supplier screening, and due diligence processes.

## C. Robustness Tests

In this section, we discuss additional tests that evaluate the robustness of our findings: (i) matching treatment and control suppliers across pre-treatment covariates, (ii) using alternative measures of export, (iii) using alternative definitions of treatment firms, and (iv) adopting a stacked DID design incorporating staggered treatment timing.

### C.1 Alternative Treatment Definition

Our baseline defines treatment and control using the initial disclosure year only, regardless of rating outcomes in subsequent years. We adopt this choice to avoid conditioning on post-treatment outcomes. Because the STA updates ratings annually, exporters may respond to the 2015 disclosure by investing in compliance systems and documentation to obtain or retain A-type status in order to leverage the program in business contracting. Imposing treatment persistence *ex post* would therefore risk reverse causality and selection on post-policy performance. We evaluate the sensitivity of the results to this choice using an alternative definition of treatment status and report the results in Table D3. Specifically, we consider firms treated if they received the A-type designation in all three years in the post period (2015–2017), and control firms are those that were never disclosed as A-type during the same period. The results remain consistent.

### C.2 Alternative Export Measure

We next re-estimate equation (1) using two alternative measures of export at the firm–destination level:  $\ln Export$  (natural logarithm of export value) and  $Export/Asset$  (export value scaled by lagged total assets). As reported in Table D4, the coefficients on  $Treat \times Post$  under both specifications continue to be positive (0.025 and 1.205, respectively) and statistically significant at the 1% level.

### C.3 Alternative Standard Errors Clustering

We then assess the sensitivity of our baseline to alternative standard errors clustering methods. In Table D5, we cluster standard errors at three alternative levels: province (Column 1), firm-jurisdiction (Column 2), and jurisdiction-year (Column 3). Our inferences remain intact across all specifications.

#### **C.4 Staggered Treatment Timing**

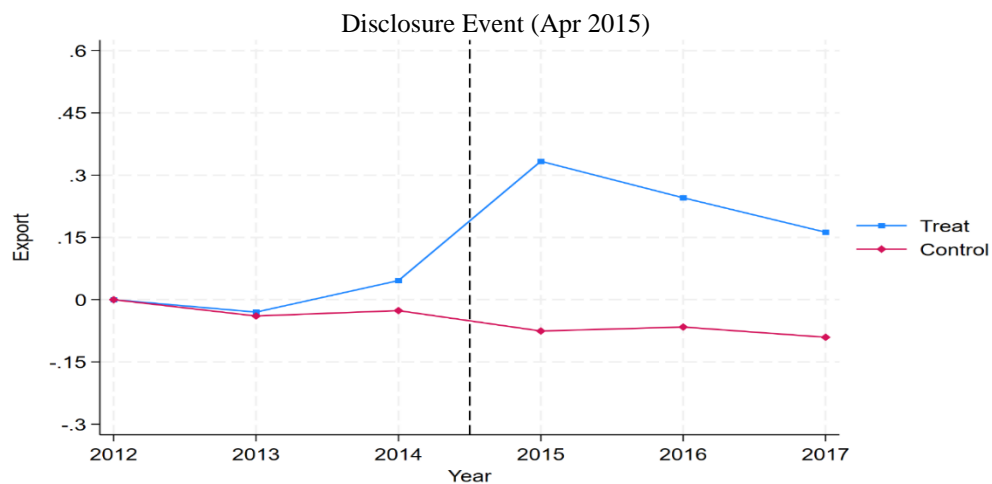
In our baseline, we define treatment by the 2015 A-type disclosure and estimate the treatment effect using a six-year window around that first disclosure year (2012–2017). We adopt this choice because the Chinese export data end in 2017, which prevents tracking later cohorts. To assess robustness to staggered treatment timing, we turn to U.S. import data, which span a longer period, and re-estimate the relationship-level effects using a stacked DID design (Cengiz, Dube, Lindner, and Zipperer 2019; Baker, Larcker, and Wang 2022).

We treat the first year a Chinese supplier appears on the STA A-type taxpayer list as its cohort event year  $t$  (cohorts  $t = 2015, 2016, \text{ or } 2017$ ). For each cohort, we build a panel consisting four years before and three years after the event year (an eight-year window). The treatment group in cohort  $t$  consists of trade relationships between U.S. customers and Chinese exporters that are first disclosed as A-type in year  $t$ ; the control group includes trade relationships between U.S. firms and Chinese exporters that were never disclosed as A-type during the sample period for this analysis. Table D6 reports the stacked DID estimates, showing that the trade between treatment suppliers and their customers increases by 3.8% ( $=e^{0.037}-1$ ) following the public disclosure of the A-type rating recognition.

## D. Additional Figures and Tables

**Figure D1: Export Intensity by A-type Taxpayer Status**

This figure plots residualized export intensity for treated and control firms over time. Export intensity is defined as firm–jurisdiction level exports scaled by lagged total sales. Residuals are obtained from regressions of export intensity on firm-level controls as specified in equation (1), firm-jurisdiction fixed effects, and year fixed effects. Each point represents the average residual for the treated firms ( $Treat = 1$ ) or control firms ( $Treat = 0$ ) in a given year, normalized to each group’s 2012 value.  $Treat$  equals one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in the first year of disclosure (2015), and zero otherwise.



### Table D1: Sample Selection

This table details our sample selection process.

	Firm-years
Enterprise taxpayers covered in both China's National Tax Survey Database and S&P Panjiva Database during our sample period from 2012 to 2017.	2,506,342
<i>Less:</i> Firms with missing or negative values of assets, sales, or employees	2,480
<i>Less:</i> Firms without available information on control variables	32,521
<b>Final sample</b>	<b><u>2,471,341</u></b>

**Table D2: Prediction of A-Type Firm Designation**

This table reports the prediction of A-type taxpayer status. The dependent variable is *A-Type Firm*, an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer, and zero otherwise. In column (1), the sample consists of unique firms in 2015. In column (2), the sample consists of firm-years during 2015-2017. *Lagged A-Type Firm* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in the previous year, and zero otherwise. All other independent variables are measured with one-year lag relative to the dependent variable, consistent with equation (1). The regression is estimated using the OLS model and includes industry and province fixed effect. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The *t*-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the province level. The superscripts \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* respectively indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels using two-tailed tests.

	(1)	(2)
Dependent Variable	A-Type Firm	A-Type Firm
Size	0.041*** (5.62)	0.026*** (5.69)
Leverage	-0.032** (-2.45)	-0.015* (-1.85)
Cash	0.075*** (3.23)	0.060*** (5.55)
ROS	0.237*** (5.55)	0.143*** (6.74)
Tangibility	-0.062** (-2.57)	-0.041* (-2.04)
ETR	1.015*** (7.16)	0.486*** (5.93)
Employee	0.036*** (4.01)	0.022*** (3.39)
Lagged A-Type Firm		0.636*** (15.70)
Industry FE	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	No	Yes
Sample Period	2015	2015-2017
Observations	49,352	91,071
Adjusted $R^2$	0.133	0.351

### Table D3: Alternative Treatment Definition

This table assesses the robustness of baseline results using an alternative definition of treatment status. *Treat* is set to one for firms consistently receive the A-type taxpayer status in all three years from 2015 to 2017 and to zero for firms that never receive the A-type taxpayer status in the sample period. The regression includes firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects and is estimated using OLS. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	(1)
Dependent Variable	Export
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.932***</b> <b>(7.59)</b>
Controls	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes
Year FE	Yes
Observations	1,492,654
Adjusted $R^2$	0.755

**Table D4: Alternative Export Measure**

This table assesses the robustness of baseline results using alternative measures of export. Columns (1) and (2) use the log of export value and export value scaled by lagged assets as the dependent variables, respectively. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. All specifications are estimated using OLS and include firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	(1)	(2)
Dependent Variable	LnExport	Export/Asset
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.025***</b> (2.97)	<b>1.205***</b> (7.50)
Controls	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.777	0.804

**Table D5: Alternative Standard Error Clustering**

This table assesses the robustness of baseline results to alternative levels of standard error clustering: province (column (1)), firm- jurisdiction (column (2)), and jurisdiction-year (column (3)). The dependent variable is *Export*, the ratio of export from the firm to the destination scaled by lagged total sales. *Treat* is an indicator equal to one if the firm is disclosed as an A-type taxpayer in 2015 (the first year of disclosure), and zero otherwise. *Post* is an indicator equal to one for years 2015 to 2017, and zero for years 2012 to 2014. All specifications are estimated using OLS and include firm-jurisdiction and year fixed effects. All variables are defined in Appendix A. All continuous variables are winsorized at 1% and 99% levels. The t-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels, respectively.

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Dependent Variable	Export	Export	Export
Clustering	Province	Firm-Jurisdiction	Jurisdiction-Year
<b>Treat × Post</b>	<b>0.527***</b> (3.57)	<b>0.527***</b> (3.47)	<b>0.527**</b> (3.25)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm-Jurisdiction FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,471,341	2,471,341	2,471,341
Adjusted $R^2$	0.758	0.758	0.758

**Table D6: Stacked DID at Relationship Level Based on U.S. Import Data**

This table documents the effects of public disclosure of A-type taxpayer status on exports from a stacked difference-in-differences design at the supplier-customer relationship level, using U.S. customs data. In this design, we construct a separate cohort around the [t-4, t+3] period for each disclosure years of 2015, 2016, and 2017. For each cohort, the treatment group consists of trade relationships between US customers and Chinese suppliers that are disclosed as an A-level taxpayer for the first time in year *t*; the control group consists of trade relationships between US customers and Chinese suppliers that are never disclosed as an A-level taxpayer before 2020. The dependent variable is *Container*, the number of raw shipping containers imported by a U.S. customer from a Chinese supplier in a given year. The regression is estimated using Poisson and includes firm-customer-cohort and year-cohort fixed effects. The *t*-statistics in parentheses are based on standard errors clustered at the firm-cohort level. \*\*\*, \*\*, and \* respectively indicate statistical significance at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels.

	(1)
Dependent Variable	Container
<b>Treat×Post</b>	<b>0.037**</b> <b>(2.27)</b>
Firm-Customer-Cohort FE	Yes
Year-Cohort FE	Yes
Observations	3,578,056
Pseudo $R^2$	0.486