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Abstract

During the eighteenth century Parliament passed increasing numbers of acts affecting property rights and the provision of public goods. The acts enabled individuals to sell, mortgage, lease, and improve land previously bound by legal legacies; they granted rights to organizations, such as turnpikes, improvement commissioners, and canal companies, which supplied infrastructure and public services; and they replaced open or common rights with private property rights in agricultural land. Parliamentary legislation in these areas increased to such an extent that acts changing property rights and providing public goods became two of the main activities of Parliament during the years leading up to the Industrial Revolution. This essay documents these trends and discusses their likely effects on the economy.

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There is growing evidence that differences in per-capita income are partly explained by differences in the ‘institutions’ of societies (see Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson, 2004). New legislation is one type of institutional change that can affect economic growth by raising investment or productivity. Economic historians have long studied the effects of legislation on British economic development during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some focus on types of legislation, such as enclosure acts, while others focus on particular acts, such as ‘the Bubble Act’ (Allen, 1992; Clark, 1998; Harris, 2000). No study, however, examines the big picture, how simultaneous changes in all types of legislation affected the British economy.

Recent work by historians has been headed in such a direction. Julian Hoppit (1996), for example, documents a tremendous growth in legislation over the eighteenth century. Hoppit employs a database constructed from all acts of Parliament passed between 1660 and 1800. The database contains counts of all acts passed in each year as well as classifications across ten subject categories. His analysis reveals that most of the growth in legislation came from legislation that dealt with personal or local matters.

This essay focuses on the economic implications of local and personal acts. In particular, we identify three categories of legislation between 1600 and 1815: personal acts, enclosure acts, and statutory authority acts. We then classify these acts in greater detail and analyze their actions. Our analysis confirms there was a tremendous growth in legislation during the eighteenth century. Specifically, the data reveals a sharp increase in acts following 1690, and an even more rapid increase after 1750. We also show that most of the growth came from personal, enclosure, and statutory authority acts.

*Personal acts* enabled individuals and families to do many things. The majority altered the property rights of an individual vis-à-vis their estate. The system of landholding at the time
prevented many landholders from using and disposing of property in the way they saw fit. Strict settlements and other limitations imposed as conditions of inheritance tied landowners’ hands. These restrictions often required landholders to dedicate property to particular tasks and to devote the proceeds to certain beneficiaries, such charities and the support of extended families. Personal acts eliminated restrictions on the uses to which property could be put. They also authorized the sale of land, and long-term leases.

Acts establishing *statutory authorities* created new organizations which constructed, operated, and maintained infrastructure such as roads, bridges, docks, and canals. They also provided public services, such as policing, poor relief, and the recovery of small debts. Statutory authorities were given a variety of new rights, including the authority to charge user-fees, levy taxes, issue debt, issue shares, and purchase land. Some of these rights were previously held by local governments, like parishes, counties, and municipalities, but in most cases they were entirely novel.

*Enclosure acts* altered property rights in agricultural villages. Some villages operated in an open-field system, in which many individuals possessed rights to cultivate crops on certain sections of the open fields. Individuals also shared rights to pasture animals, glean grain, and conduct other activities. Enclosure acts ended this system. Individuals received rights to particular pieces of property, and relinquished claims to shared assets.

We show that personal, statutory authority, and enclosure acts had economic implications because they affected property rights and the provision of public goods. First, we show there was a substantial increase in personal acts authorizing the sale of land. This finding suggests that legislation may have facilitated the reallocation of land to its highest value by eliminating restrictions associated with the system of inheritance. Second, we document a large increase in
statutory authority acts authorizing new infrastructure or public services. This finding suggests that the growth of legislation led to greater provision of public goods. Third, we show there was a growth in acts that enclosed open fields and divided common pastures. The result was that farmers could more easily introduce new crops, and improve livestock breeds.

Our paper also provides a new perspective on the impact of political changes, like the Glorious Revolution in 1688-89. Previous scholars have argued that the Glorious Revolution led to an increase in taxation or a change in the security of property rights (see O’Brien, 1988; North and Weingast, 1989). Our findings show that the number of personal and statutory authority acts increased after the Glorious Revolution. They suggest, therefore, that the shift in power away from the king and towards Parliament may have contributed to economic growth by changing property rights and increasing public good provision.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 1 describes the data sources and methods. Section 2 examines the trends in legislation across all categories of acts. Section 3 analyzes personal, enclosure, and statutory acts in more detail. Section 4 examines the links with political changes and economic growth. Section 5 concludes.

1. Data Sources and Methods

Our study focuses on the main type of legislation in seventeenth and eighteenth century England—the act of Parliament. The first acts of Parliament occurred in the thirteenth century, and continued up to the 1640s when the English Civil War erupted. Between 1641 and 1660 there were no acts because both the Monarchy and the House of Lords were abolished. Legislation was passed in this period by bodies known as the ‘Long Parliament’
(1649-1653) or the ‘Second Parliament’ (1656-57). After the Restoration of the Crown in 1660, acts of Parliament resumed and continue up to the present day.

The royal proclamation and royal charter were other forms of legislation during the seventeenth century. Royal proclamations largely ended in 1645 at the height of the English Civil War. Later in the paper, we investigate whether proclamations served as a substitute for acts during the early 1600s when King James I and Charles I fought with Parliament.

The House of Lords is the main repository for historical information on acts of Parliament because the records of the House of Commons were burned in a fire. The House of Lords’ maintains a website, Portcullis, which provides the regal year, calendar year, and the title for all acts passed by Parliament starting in the early sixteenth century.\(^2\) Portcullis also indicates whether each act was public or private before 1800, and afterwards whether each act was public or local/personal.

The title is the most important piece of information for our purposes. Most titles were written by clerks, whose objective was to clarify the subject matter of the act, rather than market its implications to the broader public. To give an example, the famous Bubble Act of 1720 has a descriptive title on Portcullis.

An Act for better securing certain Powers and Privileges intended to be granted by His Majesty by two Charters, for Assurance of Ships and Merchandizes at Sea; and for lending Money upon Bottomry; and for restraining several extravagant and unwarrantable Practices therein mentioned.\(^3\)

The last line refers to restrictions on the formation of corporations after the South Sea Bubble, which subsequently gave rise to the name Bubble Act.

We acquired a copy of the Portcullis database for all acts between 1500 and 1900. Our study focuses on the years between 1600 and 1815 because it was the period where the

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\(^2\) See [http://www.portcullis.parliament.uk/DserveA/].
volume of legislation increased dramatically. The years 1600 to 1815 also coincide with the reign of the Stuart monarchs, followed by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, and significant portions of the Hanoverian dynasty. We end with 1815 because the Napoleonic period marked the peak in terms of total legislation.

Our goal is to convert the title of every act into a vector of variables suitable for quantitative analysis. The initial step is to categorize acts according to their subject matter. We draw upon the work of previous scholars, particularly Julian Hoppit (1996), who categorized all acts between 1660 and 1800. Hoppit sorted acts into ten mutually exclusive categories: personal, government, finance, law and order, religion, armed services, social issues, economy, communications, and miscellaneous. We follow these categories, but make a few modifications. Hoppit defined personal acts as legislation that ‘concerned private matters, especially estates and inheritances’ (p. 119). We use a similar definition and define personal acts as all legislation that changed the rights of a specific individual.

Hoppit defines economy as the subject category for all legislation dealing with economic issues. As he points out, however, enclosure acts comprise most of the economy acts. Enclosure acts were quite different from other economic legislation that regulated a particular industry, or all industries, as in the famous Statue of Monopolies. Therefore, we identify enclosure acts as a separate category from other types of legislation.

We also define statutory authority acts as a separate subject category. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb (1963) coined the term ‘statutory authorities for specific purposes’ when they described the myriad of local organizations providing infrastructure or public services in the eighteenth century. We borrow their terminology and group together all acts that addressed the provision of infrastructure or public services in a particular area. This category

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3 Public Act 6 George I, c. 18.
encompasses Hoppit’s communications group because many statutory authorities dealt with transport infrastructure. Also included are acts that dealt with others types of infrastructure, like water supply, churches, embankments, prisons, workhouses, and courthouses. We also combine transport infrastructure with acts that dealt with public services, like poor relief and the recovery of small debts. All of these acts had a common trait in that they affected the provision of local public goods. They were also similar in that they created new organizations with specific rights, like the authority to levy user-fees or issue debt.

After identifying personal, enclosure, and statutory authority acts, we apply a series of algorithms to separate them into subcategories with similar structures and purposes. We also encode the actions associated with these acts. The consistency of form and function within subcategories makes it relatively straightforward to extract the relevant information.

An example should clarify the process. In 1724 there was an act “to enable Stephen Hales Clerk, and Henry Carrington Gentleman, to sell their undivided Moieties of the Freehold, Leasehold and Copyhold Estates at Much Hadham.”\(^4\) The first step of our algorithm identifies this as a personal act, because it affected the rights of an individual. Secondly, we identify that this Act dealt with an estate, which is one of our subcategories for personal acts. Third, we identify that this Act authorized the sale of property.

In the case of statutory authorities, we also distinguish between acts that created new infrastructure or public services and acts that amended previous statutory authority acts. The following two titles provide an illustration of the different actions undertaken by acts that dealt with canals.

An Act for making and maintaining a Navigable Canal from the Calder Navigation, at or near Sowerby Bridge Wharf, in the Parish of Halifax in the West Riding of the County of York, to

\(^4\) Private Act 11 George I, c. 12
join the Canal of his Grace the Duke of Bridgewater, in the Parish of Manchester in the County Palatine of Lancaster; and also certain Cuts from the said intended Canal.\textsuperscript{5}

An Act for altering and amending an Act passed in the thirty fourth Year of the Reign of His present Majesty, for making and maintaining the Peak Forest Canal; and for granting to the Company of Proprietors of the said Canal further and other Powers.\textsuperscript{6}

According to our definition, the first Act authorizes new infrastructure because it called for the making and maintaining of a navigable canal. The second Act does not authorize new infrastructure because it altered and amended a previous act.

To understand how personal, enclosure, and statutory authority acts affected the economy we study the number of acts passed in each year. In particular, we are interested in the number of acts that changed property rights or authorized the provision of new infrastructure and public services. One potential problem with counting is that acts are heterogeneous, even within a subject category. For example, two acts that call for the making of a canal may be different because one authorizes a major construction project, and the other a small extension to an existing canal. In the sections below, we discuss why counting acts with similar actions helps to reveal the broad trends. We also discuss how further information can be added in the future.

2. General Trends

Scholars have long recognized that the eighteenth century witnessed a rapid rise in legislation. Using our database of acts, we are able to confirm that a ‘regime shift’ did indeed occur starting in the late seventeenth century. Figure 1 plots the number of acts in ten-year intervals between 1500 and 1899. There were anywhere from 5 to 385 acts passed each decade between 1500 and 1690. The number increased to over 600 per decade in the 1690s, 1700s, and 1710s. Another shift occurred in the 1750s, as the number of acts increased to around 1200 and

\textsuperscript{5} Public Act, 34 George III, c. 78
then continued to climb during the second half of the eighteenth century. The peak was in the
1800s where 3860 acts were passed. Afterwards, the number fluctuates between 2700 and 3800
per decade throughout the nineteenth century.

What types of acts drove this growth in legislation? We address this question by separating
personal, statutory authority, and enclosure acts from all others. Table 1 shows the distribution
across the four categories between 1600 and 1815. Personal was the largest with 5064 Acts, or
24.5 percent of the total. Statutory authority was second with 4929 Acts or 23.8 percent of the
total. Enclosure was third with 3687 Acts or 17.8 percent. The other category contains 7031
acts or 33.9 percent of the total.

The most striking feature of table 1 is that two thirds of all acts belonged to the personal,
statutory authority, and enclosure categories. One reason is that these acts addressed a wide
range of economic issues, including individual rights, common rights in agriculture, and the
financing of infrastructure or public services. Second, all of these acts were specific to either an
individual or a location. As a result, each type of personal, enclosure, and statutory authority act
was replicated numerous times between 1600 and 1815.

Figure 2 shows the trends in personal, statutory authority, and enclosure acts versus all others
between 1600 and 1815. Personal acts were the largest category during the seventeenth century,
but their growth was especially dramatic after 1690. Personal acts comprised 43 percent of
legislation between 1660 and 1690, while they accounted for 53 percent between 1691 and 1720.
The relative size of personal acts diminished after 1720, but they remained the largest category
until the late eighteenth century.

Statutory authority acts were a small proportion of all legislation before 1660. Their
numbers increased slightly during the early 1660s, and again after the 1690s. Between 1660 and

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6 Local and Personal Act, 39 & 40 George III, c. 38.
1690, there were 58 statutory authority acts compared to 160 between 1691 and 1720. The most substantial growth in statutory authority acts came after 1750. They accounted for 13 percent between 1691 and 1749 versus 27 percent between 1750 and 1815.

There were few enclosure acts prior to the 1720s. They increased between 1720 and 1750, but remained a relatively small proportion of all acts. After 1750, enclosure acts had the highest growth of any category.

The ‘other’ category experienced a surge after the 1690s, but remained only slightly larger than in the early 1600s. It was not until after 1775 that other acts significantly increased. They reached their peak in the early nineteenth century, when they comprised nearly 40 percent of all acts. Many dealt with government finance, regulation, foreign trade, and colonies.

3 Personal, Statutory Authority, and Enclosure Acts

The previous section showed that personal, statutory authority, and enclosure acts accounted for around two thirds of all acts between 1600 and 1815. In this section, we analyze these three categories in greater detail starting with personal acts.

3.1 Personal Acts

Personal acts were unique because they changed the rights of specific individuals, usually landowners or wealthy merchants. Table 2 distinguishes personal acts by the type of rights affected. Estate acts were the largest subcategory with 3275 acts or 64.7 percent of all personal acts. They typically changed an individual’s rights vis-à-vis their family estate. Naturalization acts were the second largest subcategory with 1078 acts or 21.3 percent of the total. Naturalization acts granted citizenship. The remaining subcategories were name acts, divorce acts, and a miscellaneous group. Together they contained 711 or 14.1 percent of the total.
Divorce acts dissolved marriages and allowed individuals to remarry. Name acts allowed an individual to take a different surname, usually for the purpose of inheriting property.

Naturalization, name, and divorce acts likely impacted the individuals involved, but their effect on the broader economy was probably limited. The same cannot be said of estate acts, because they affected the market for land and other types of property. To understand estate acts, it is necessary to briefly review the system of inheritance known as strict settlement. Settlements were legal contracts in which a landowner and his male heir agreed to become life-tenants for a particular property. As life-tenants they were not allowed to sell the land, or grant leases for a term longer than their life. Settlements also placed ‘uses’ upon the land, which provided income for wives, daughters, and younger sons in the event the original landowner died. The annual income was financed through rents from the property that was subject to the settlement contract.

The settlement contract also stated that the first unborn son of the male heir would assume control over the land as tenant in tail. When the unborn son reached the age of 21, they could enter into a similar agreement with their father by resettling the land. If they chose to resettle, they become a life-tenant and the property remained in the family line. If the unborn son did not resettle, then he assumed absolute ownership over the property. In most cases the son agreed to resettle the land, and therefore the restrictions on land often continued through the generations.

The studies by John Habakkuk (1994) and others have shown that settlement contracts emerged in the mid-seventeenth century, and continued to be a major component of the inheritance system up to the late nineteenth century. We don’t know how much land was subject to strict settlements, but the estimates suggest at least one-quarter, and as much as three-fourths, of all land was settled at any given time (English and Saville, 1983, p. 30). Thus a significant portion of land in England would have been inalienable or subject to the uses described above.
There were two facets of settlements which encouraged the involvement of Parliament. First, no part of a settlement could be changed until the person named as tenant in tail came of age. This fact meant that a settlement could be changed infrequently, as a family waited for the heir to come of age, and then for the father and son to reach an agreement on restructuring the estate. Family members could resolve this problem by getting an act of Parliament altering the provisions of the settlement. An estate act superseded any legal contract between private parties, and thus it was able to alter settlements in an expedient manner.

Second, settlements restricted the uses to which land could be put. The holder of a settled estate (i.e. the life tenant) could not grant leases lasting beyond his own life, nor could they grant leases from which they benefited at the expense of their successors (such as leases in which tenants paid lump sums up front in return for lower rents later). The holder of a settled estate was also prohibited from selling, exchanging, or mortgaging the property. Similarly, the holder of an estate could not alter, change, lay waste to, or attempt to improve a property.

The basis of this rule was that the successor’s rights must be protected, and in certain conditions, the removal of trees, hedges, and buildings; the opening of new mines, quarries, and peat bogs; and the conversion of arable lands into pasture could be considered waste. Some actions, like granting leases and altering land, could be undertaken if a settlement contained specific clauses. In the event that enabling clauses were absent, family members could obtain an estate act that authorized particular actions, like leases, sales, exchanges, and mortgages.  

\footnote{The Chancery Court provided an alternative venue in which settlements could be amended, but in practice an Act of Parliament was cheaper to obtain and much faster than a suit in Chancery (English and Saville, 1983, p. 50).}
Estate acts changed settlements in a variety of ways, but the titles suggest there were some general forms. We identify the most common forms and define them as a subcategory of estate acts. Table 3 lists the number of acts in each subcategory, and their percentage of all estate acts. Vesting acts were most common and included 989 Acts or 30.2 percent of the total. The typical vesting act placed property under the control of an individual for some stated reason. For example, an act from 1702 was for “vesting certain Lands and Tenements of Montague Earl of Abingdon, in Trustees, to be sold, and purchasing other Lands of equal Value, and limiting the Lands to be purchased to the same Uses, as the Lands to be sold are limited.”\textsuperscript{8} In this case, trustees were given the authority to sell land, and then purchase other land. Normally, such sales would not be allowed because dependents, such as the widow or younger children, had a right to a portion of the property income. This estate Act ensured that income would still be available for dependants because it called for the purchase of additional property that would be put to the same uses.

Enabling acts were the second largest subcategory with 808 Acts or 24.7 percent of all estate acts. Enabling acts allowed an individual to do something with a property in an estate. For example an Act from 1692 enabled “Abel Atwood to sell some Lands to pay Debts, and make Provision for younger Children.”\textsuperscript{9} An act in 1788 enabled Charles Earl Camden to grant “building leases of the prebendal lands at Kentish Town, in the County of Middlesex.”\textsuperscript{10} Both of these estate Acts allowed property owners to take actions that were forbidden by strict settlements, such as selling their land or granting building leases. Notice that the first act states that land will be sold to pay debts. This was a common rationale, but it is unclear whether it was the true motive behind most estate acts.

\textsuperscript{8} Private Act, 1 Anne, c. 11  
\textsuperscript{9} Private Act, 4 William & Mary, c. 4.
Sale acts were the third largest subcategory with 391 or 24.7 percent of the total. They authorized the sale of property if certain conditions were met. For example, a 1725 Act permitted the “sale of several estates of Henry Grey Esquire…and for settling other estates of equal value…to the same uses.”

The remaining subcategories for estate acts are confirming, empowering, settling, exchanging, discharging, and a miscellaneous group. Together they accounted for 1087 or 33 percent of the total. They are similar to the categories discussed earlier. Confirming acts typically legalized a transaction that had already taken place. Empowering acts empowered someone to sell or lease land in an estate. Settling acts placed land into the confines of a strict settlement. Exchanging acts authorized the exchange of some property within an estate for another. Lastly, the typical discharging act eliminated uses on one property, and placed them on another.

In general, estate acts allowed the holders of settled estates – either a life tenant or trustees – to take some action that was restricted by the settlement. They authorized a wide variety of transactions including sales and long-term leasing of land, mortgaging of property, settling jointures upon spouses, cutting of old-growth timber, and sales of ores and minerals. We argue that one of the most important functions of an estate act was to enable the sale of property. We use a 10 percent random sample of all estate acts to determine how many authorized property sales. The results suggest that 49.6 percent of all estate acts authorized sales. We also estimate how many acts authorized property sales over time. Specifically, we calculate the percentage of estate acts in each five-year period that authorized a property sale, and then we multiply the percentage by the total number of estate acts in that period.

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10 Private Act, 28 George II, c. 41.
11 Private Act, 12 George I, c. 27.
Figure 3 reports the raw figures in 5-year intervals as well as a 20-year moving average. Both series show that few acts authorized property sales up to the 1640s. There was a sharp increase following the Restoration in 1660, and again after 1690. The estimates suggest that between 10 and 20 acts authorized the sale of property in each year during 1690s, 1700s, and 1710s. The number of such acts varied substantially after 1710. In some years over 15 were passed, while in others only 4 or 5 were passed.

Another important function of estate acts was to enable land to be leased. The current holder could not lease settled land for a term longer than their life. Also they could not grant leases that would change land, such as the building lease discussed above. As before, we use our 10 percent random sample to determine how many estate acts dealt authorized some type of lease. The results suggest that 13.6 percent of estate acts authorized lease contracts. Figure 4 presents our estimates over time. Similar to acts authorizing sales, there was a sharp increase in leasing acts in the 1690s and early 1700s. The numbers decline in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, before increasing rapidly after 1750. At the peak, in the late eighteenth century, parliament was passing between 4 and 5 such acts per year.

Perhaps the most striking result is that acts authorizing property sales and leases increased dramatically after 1690, and remained high for much of the early eighteenth century. This change could be due to several factors. First, the system of strict settlement emerged in the mid-seventeenth century, and therefore, some estate acts in the 1690s and early 1700s may have corrected errors that were made by lawyers who were still learning about the settlement process. It is also possible that many landed families experienced financial difficulties between 1690 and 1720. In such a case, property sales may have been a mechanism by which families became financially solvent (see Habakkuk, 1994). Lastly, it is
possible that the greater political power of landowners after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-
89 impacted the number of estate acts. Later in paper we discuss how this major political
event impacted both personal acts and statutory authority acts.

We should emphasize that a substantial growth in the number acts authorizing sales or
leases does not necessarily imply there was a substantial growth in number of acres that were
sold or leased, or the total value of land being sold or leased. In order to address these issues
one would need to attach an acreage or value measure to each act. There is such information
in the text of the estate acts, as well as the Journals of the House of Commons. We are in the
process of collecting this data, and in the future we plan to estimate how much land was sold
or leased. That being said, we believe that changes in the number of estate acts authorizing
sales or leases provides a reasonably accurate measure of changes in the value or size of land
being sold or leased. Each act dealt with one family estate, and therefore any variation would
come from the size of family holdings and the types of properties that were settled. If settled
properties had a distribution in terms of value or size, and this distribution was constant over
time, then our sample would capture the typical properties as well as the extremes. Using a
law of large numbers argument we expect that growth of acts authorizing sales or leases
approximates the growth in the value or size of properties being sold or leased. To put it
differently, it is highly unlikely that in the 1690s and early 1700s there was little change in
the value or size of properties being sold or leased because of estate acts.

3.2 Statutory Authority Acts

Statutory authority acts addressed the provision of infrastructure or public services in a
particular area. Table 4 separates statutory authority acts into subcategories. Road acts were the
largest subcategory with 2692 acts or 55.5 percent of the total. Urban was the second largest
subcategory with 553 or 11.4 percent of the total. Canal, port, church, river, and bridge acts were next. Together they accounted for 1057 or 29.1 percent. Poor relief, drainage, courts of small request, county administration, and railways were less frequent and amounted to 550 or 9.1 percent of the total.

It is clear from this table that statutory authority acts addressed a broad range of infrastructure. Canal, river, port, road, bridge, and railway acts all dealt with transport infrastructure. Urban acts affected street paving, water supply, marketplaces, and public squares. Drainage acts addressed land drainage and embankments. County administration acts dealt with improvements to gaols, debtors’ prisons, courthouses, and shire halls. Church acts affected churches and burial grounds. Lastly, poor relief acts dealt with workhouses.

Statutory authority acts also addressed a wide range of public services. Urban acts created a street watch and removed nuisances and annoyances in cities. Poor relief acts dealt with assistance to the poor. Court of small request acts provided dispute resolution for credit contracts valued at less than 40 shillings. The miscellaneous subcategory also contained acts dealing with public services, such as the post office, theatres, and playhouses.

Statutory authority acts typically made an organization responsible for the provision of infrastructure or public services (Webb and Webb, 1963). The organizations could be local governments, like municipalities, parishes, or counties, but in most cases they were private or non-profit entities. Road, bridge, river, poor relief, drainage, port, court of small request, and church acts usually created a body of trustees composed of landowners or merchants. These individuals did not have an ownership stake in the organization, and generally served without direct compensation. Canal and railway acts were different because they created joint stock companies, or corporations. In either case, landowners and merchants played a key role in the
management and promotion of statutory authorities. Perhaps the most famous example is the Duke of Bridgewater who successfully lobbied for an act of Parliament to build a canal on his own land near Manchester.

The body of trustees or directors were granted a number of privileges by statutory authority acts. One of the most important was the right to levy user-fees or other types of taxes. Road acts gave trustees the right to levy tolls on road-users and claim statute labor from inhabitants along the road. The tolls marked a significant departure from the existing system, in which parishes paid for road improvements with local labor and property taxes. Canal, river, port, bridge, and railway acts were similar because they introduced fees. In some cases, they also replaced property taxes levied by municipalities and counties. Court of small requests acts introduced special fees for different types of court cases. The fees could be different from county courts, which served as an alternative venue for the recovery of small debts. Urban, drainage, poor relief, and church acts authorized property taxes that targeted specific individuals, or applied to jurisdictions which overlapped with different municipalities and parishes.\(^\text{12}\)

Trustees or commissioners were also given the right to issue debt or shares. In road, bridge, river, and port acts the debts could be secured by the tolls. This meant that if interest payments were not met, the bondholders had the right to seize the toll revenues. Church acts authorized the issuance of annuities, known as tontines. Canal and railway acts authorized both bonds and shares. These securities, along with the others mentioned above, had the additional advantage that they could be traded in secondary markets.

\(^{12}\) Lighthouse Acts are a well known example of a statutory authority Act that introduced user-fees. Ronald Coase (1974) drew on British history to challenge the argument that lighthouses were the quintessential example of a non-excludable public good. He based his argument on the fact that ships paid tolls for lighthouses when they arrived in British ports. Coase did not mention, however, that lighthouses were just one example of this phenomenon.
Statutory authority acts also defined the procedures by which land could be purchased. Typically trustees or directors were authorized to negotiate with landowners individually. If they could not agree on a price, the trustees or directors could appeal to a body of commissions (specifically named in the act) who had the authority to compel landowners to sell. These procedures provided the foundations for eminent domain law.\footnote{Statutory authority acts also restricted the body of trustees or directors. Transport infrastructure acts usually restricted the tolls by defining a maximum schedule. The schedules distinguished between different types of traffic or goods, and were unique to each organization. Limits on the interest rate and the amount of outstanding debt or shares were also present.}

The provisions of a statutory authority act could always be revised through another act. Canal acts were often amended in order to add branch lines or to increase the authorized capital. Many road acts renewed the provisions of previous acts, which automatically expired after 21 years. Some road acts also added miles to the authority of an existing body of trustees, or changed the maximum schedule of tolls that could be levied. Urban and poor relief acts sometimes made an existing body of commissioners responsible for additional services. In other cases, they clarified and amended the existing responsibilities of commissioners.

Statutory authority acts thus performed one of two functions. They either authorized new infrastructure and public services, or they amended previous acts. We determine how many acts authorized new infrastructure or services by studying a 20 percent random sample of all statutory authority acts. Table 5 shows the estimated percentage of acts in each subcategory that authorized a particular type of infrastructure or public service. Around 50 to 60 percent of transport acts called for new infrastructure. Specifically, 60 percent of canals acts authorized the construction of a canal, while 51 percent of road acts authorized the making of a new road, or the repair, widening, or turning of an existing road. Fifty-eight percent of bridge acts made or
repaired a bridge, 62 percent of river acts made a river navigable, and 50 percent of port acts built or repaired a harbor, dock, or pier.

A higher percentage of acts authorized new infrastructure or services in the urban subcategory. Sixty-one percent cleansed, watered, lighted, or paved city streets. Twenty seven percent introduced a street watch, 29 percent removed nuisances and annoyances, 9 percent provided fresh water, and 7 percent moved or constructed a marketplace. Overall, 77 percent of urban acts authorized new infrastructure or services in cities.

It was also the case that a higher percentage of drainage, poor relief, county administration, church, and court of small request acts authorized new infrastructure or services. Sixty-five percent of drainage acts authorized the drainage of land, while 16 percent authorized embankments. Twenty percent of poor relief acts called for a workhouse to be built, while 42 percent authorized better relief of the poor. Sixty-six percent of country administration acts authorized that gaols or debtors prisons be built, while 33 percent enabled the building of a shire hall or courthouse. Eighty-three percent of church acts built or repaired a church, and 18 percent built church yards and burial grounds. Finally, 83 percent of court of small request acts authorized the establishment of a new small claims court.

To summarize the preceding data we estimate the percentage of statutory authority acts that authorized any type of new infrastructure or public service. Our estimate is listed in the bottom row of table 5. We find that 58 percent of statutory authority acts authorized some type of new infrastructure or public service. This finding shows that the time series on total statutory authority acts overstates the number of new infrastructure projects or services authorized each
year. This is perhaps not surprising because statutory authority acts contained detailed regulations, which needed to be updated as the economy changed.\textsuperscript{14}

Our 20 percent random sample also allows us to estimate the time-series pattern for acts authorizing new infrastructure and public services. In each five-year period, we estimate the proportion of acts authorizing new infrastructure and public services, and then multiply by the total. Figure 5 plots the results between 1600 and 1815. It shows that few acts authorized infrastructure before 1690. Afterwards, there is some growth up to the 1750s, at which point there is a sharp acceleration. The number of acts authorizing new infrastructure or public services declines somewhat during the 1780s, probably in response to the American Revolution. The dip is only temporary, however, as the series continues its rapid growth up to 1815.

Some statutory authority acts dealt with transport infrastructure, like roads, rivers, bridges, canals, harbors, and railways, while others dealt with water supply, land drainage, and better poor relief. Perhaps the acts for transport improvements followed a different trend than other statutory authority acts? Figure 6 addresses this issue by distinguishing between acts that authorized new transport infrastructure and acts that authorized other types of new infrastructure or public services. The figure shows that most acts authorized new transport infrastructure, which is perhaps not surprising because transport was a major concern in the eighteenth century. The figure also shows that new transport acts had a similar trend as acts authorizing other types of new infrastructure and services. First, there were very few of either type in the seventeenth century. Second, they both increase substantially after 1750 and have similar fluctuations in the 1780s, 1790s, and early 1800s. The two series diverge however in the early eighteenth century, as transport acts increase but others remain rare.

\textsuperscript{14} For instance, the inflation of the early nineteenth century implied that user-fees set by the act decreased in real terms. This led to the passage of numerous amendment acts in the early 1800s which raised the
Figures 5 and 6 strongly suggest that the passage of statutory authority acts led to an increase in infrastructure investment, and perhaps more spending on public services. From the titles we cannot determine how much investment increased, because we don’t know how much investment was associated with each type of statutory authority act. Fortunately, the records of parliamentary committees contain information on the average cost of building roads, canals, bridges, harbors, and improving rivers. Thus in the future we plan to estimate the amount of investment authorized by statutory authority acts, particularly in the area of transport.

Ron Harris (2000) has provided some initial estimates of investment associated with turnpike, canal, port, river, and urban acts. According to Harris, the value of capital raised for canals, rivers, turnpikes, water works, docks, and gas lighting totaled 41 million pounds in 1810 (p. 195). Forty-one million pounds is large considering that the value of capital in the East India Company, the Bank of England, and the South Sea Company combined was around 15 million pounds in 1810. Harris also shows that investment in canals, rivers, turnpikes, water works, docks, and gas lighting equaled 6.3 percent of the total capital stock in 1810. Thus it is appears that statutory authority acts had a sizable impact on the accumulation of social overhead capital, which was crucial for the early Industrial Revolution.

3.3 Enclosure Acts

Enclosure acts changed property rights over land in individual parishes by eliminating open or common rights and creating private property rights. Enclosure acts have been studied by several scholars including Robert Allen (1992), Mark Overton (1998), and Greg Glark (1998, 2001). Here we provide a brief overview and present some new evidence from our database.

Nearly a quarter of all land in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century belonged to what was known as the common or open field system (Clark, 2001). It had 3 characteristics.
First, there were open fields farmed by several individuals simultaneously. Decisions about which crops to plant were made collectively by the parish, or the group of individuals with holdings. Second, open fields contained scattered plots. Scattering meant that an individual farmed several ‘strips’ within one or more of the open fields. Third, there was a common pasture, where several individuals had the right to graze their animals in the field.

Enclosure acts eliminated the open or common field system through specific actions. We identify which actions were most common by analyzing a 10 percent random sample of the titles. The results show that enclosing, dividing, and allotting were the most common. Specifically, we find that 95 percent enclosed land, 67 percent divided land, and 24 percent allotted land.

Enclosing eliminated the open field and created individual plots that were fenced off from others. The new plots consolidated the holdings of a single individual so that scattering was eliminated. Enclosing also gave individuals control over which crops to plant, or whether to use the land as pasture. Alloting also eliminated open fields and created plots controlled by individuals. Allotting was similar to enclosing, and was necessary when acts dealt with waste or fields in which individual holdings were absent. Dividing called for common pastures to be divided into separate holdings. As before the new holdings were controlled by individuals, who had the sole authority to control land use.

Enclosure acts contained other actions, such as improving and draining land, but the vast majority included some combination of enclosing, dividing, and allotting. These three actions were similar because they eliminated open or common rights and created private property rights. We estimate the number of acts that authorized enclosing, dividing, and allotting in order to determine their frequency. Specifically, we calculate the percentage of acts in each five-year period that enclosed, divided, or allotted, and then we multiply the percentage by the total
number of enclosure acts. The results are presented in figure 7 for the years between 1726 and 1815. In the late 1770s, over 50 acts a year enclosed open or common land and around the same number divided common land. The number of enclosing and dividing acts declined dramatically during the 1780s, and then returned to over 50 a year in the 1790s. It is worth noting that the numbers of enclosing and divided acts were nearly identical before 1800. This is because enclosing and dividing were usually included in the same enclosure act.

After 1805 the number of enclosing acts increased to over 100 per year, while the number of dividing acts declined dramatically. There are two explanations for the divergence between enclosing and dividing. First, there may have been a change in the information contained in the title. In the 1810s nearly all titles stated that the act was for enclosing land, which may imply that dividing was a component of the term enclosing. The second possibility is that common pastures become rare by the early nineteenth century because earlier acts eliminated them. Whatever the explanation, dividing was not included in most enclosure acts after 1805.

The figure also shows that very few enclosure acts enabled allotting before 1770. Allotting became more common in the 1770s, before declining in the 1780s. Allotting acts accelerated dramatically in the late 1790s, when there were around 50 per year. Allotting declined dramatically after 1805, perhaps for the same reasons as dividing.

The evidence in figure 7 suggests that open and common rights were eliminated in a large number of parishes between 1760 and 1815. Greg Clark (2001) estimates that 25 percent of agricultural land was subject to open or common rights in 1700, and that by the mid-nineteenth century these rights were essentially eliminated. The implication is that the growth in enclosure acts between 1760 and the 1820s established private property rights for a significant portion of agricultural land.
The establishment of private property rights through enclosure acts is sometimes considered to be a key factor in the productivity growth of British agriculture. The argument rests upon the idea that the open field system inhibited agricultural improvements or new techniques. For example, it is often suggested that collective decision making in the open fields created barriers to the introduction of new crops, like turnips and clover. There is also an argument that scattering reduced agricultural efficiency by increasing labor inputs. Finally, some suggest that common rights limited the quality of livestock by encouraging the over-grazing of pastures (see Overton, 1998 for an overview).

Robert Allen (1992) and Greg Clark (1998) have investigated these claims by evaluating the effects of enclosure Acts. Allen finds that enclosures did not raise the value of farm output or wheat yields per acre. Allen does find that new crops, like turnips and clover, were often introduced after enclosures, but he argues they had little effect on productivity. Clark has shown that land rents increased after enclosures, but finds that the rent gains were modest, especially considering the costs of enclosure. The findings of Allen and Clark suggest that enclosure acts did not revolutionize British agriculture on their own. That being said, enclosures increased flexibility by making it easier for farmers to introduce new crops, and improve their livestock. Thus they were still an important development in the agricultural sector.

4. Links with Political Changes and Economic Growth

In this section, we examine the links between legislation and major political changes, as well as the connections between legislation and economic growth. As we saw earlier the great surge in acts began in the 1690s and early 1700s. This was an important period in English political history because it followed the Restoration of 1660 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. In
the early 1600s the Stuart monarchs, King James I and King Charles I, had major disputes with Parliament over taxation, religion, and foreign policy. As part of their strategy to weaken their opponents, James I and Charles I infrequently called Parliament into session. However, by not calling Parliament into session the Stuarts made it impossible for acts to be passed. They tried to address this problem by issuing royal proclamations, which served as a substitute for acts of Parliament.

The Stuarts were defeated by parliamentary forces during the English Civil War of the 1640s. In the process King Charles I lost his head, and England briefly had a republican form of government. The experiment did not last, and in 1660 the old constitution was ‘restored’ along with King Charles II. Political instability remerged during the mid-1680s when King James II assumed the throne. James II was especially controversial because it was thought that he would make England a Catholic/Absolutist country, much like France and Spain. His reign came to an end with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, in which William of Orange invaded England. James II was forced to flee, and Parliament agreed that William & Mary would become the new king and queen. As part of the revolutionary settlement, William agreed to the Declaration of Rights, which assured that Parliament would have the right convene, and that the king would have to consult Parliament on legislative matters.

King William and Queen Mary ruled from 1689 to 1714. In many ways, this was a transition period between the constitutional struggles of the Stuart era (1603-1688), and the relative stability of the early Hanoverian era (1714-1760). Initially William tried to reestablish the power of the monarchy, but ultimately its influence waned. By Queen Mary’s death in 1714 Parliament had established its sovereignty and was successful in placing effective limits on the crown.
The long-run effects of the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution have been much discussed by historians and social scientists, but there has been little examination of its effect on changes in property rights and public good provision via legislation. Figure 8 illustrates the relationship between these two political changes and all acts passed between 1603 and 1720. It also shows the time-series for all acts minus personal and statutory authority acts.

There were few acts of any kind between 1601 and 1640. The low number is due to the fact that James I and Charles I called Parliament into session infrequently, and Parliament passed few acts when it was in session. There were no acts during the 1640s and 1650s, but there was legislation passed by various bodies like the Long-Parliament. All of this legislation was nullified by the Restoration in 1660, and is not in our data. Shortly after the Restoration in 1660, there was an increase in all acts of Parliament, including personal and statutory authority acts. The expansion did not last, however, as all acts dropped significantly during the 1670s and 1680s. Once again the contraction was due to the fact that the king called Parliament infrequently, and Parliament passed few acts when it was in session.

There was a sharp increase in all acts after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. Growth occurred because Parliament met annually. It was also the case that the number of acts passed per legislative session increased from an average of 39 between 1660 and 1689 to 68 between 1690 and 1720. Figure 8 also shows that most of the increase after the Glorious Revolution came from the growth of personal and statutory authority acts. In fact, in the absence of these two categories, it is not clear that the Glorious Revolution had any impact on the volume of legislation.

We reach a similar conclusion after incorporating royal proclamations. Proclamations were common in the early 1600s as the Stuarts tried to rule without calling Parliament into session. Royal proclamations were similar to acts that dealt with regulation, taxation, functions of government, and religion. However, there were no proclamations that changed individual rights, and there were no proclamations creating organizations with the right to provide infrastructure or public services. Thus proclamations were not a substitute for personal and statutory authority acts.

Figure 9 uses data from Larkin and Hughes (1973) to count the number of proclamations plus acts between 1603 and 1645 and the number of acts thereafter. The figure shows that there was still a growth in legislative activity after the Glorious Revolution, but it also shows if personal and statutory authority acts are removed, then there was no change. In other words, if the Glorious Revolution had an impact on the volume of legislation, then it came through an increase in legislation changing property rights and the provision of public goods.

This evidence raises the question of why personal and statutory authority acts increased after the Glorious Revolution. While an adequate explanation is beyond the scope of this paper, we think it is likely that the shift in power from the king to Parliament played some role. Landowners in particular became the most influential group in the political system, and once they had greater power they could use legislation to address their concerns. One of the most important concerns for landowners was their ability to sell or lease land. Thus it is possible that changes in political power increased the priority of legislation that altered property rights over land. A similar argument could apply to statutory authority and enclosure acts. In these cases, landowners stood to benefit because greater infrastructure and the elimination of the open field
system tended to increase land rents. Thus when they gained power landowners could elevate the priority of statutory authority and enclosure acts.

4.1 Links with Economic Growth

There is a general view that well-defined property rights and greater provision of public goods are necessary for economic growth. We have shown that there was a growth in legislation changing property rights and the provision of infrastructure during the early stages of the industrial revolution in England. Is there any evidence that the rise in this type of legislation was related to economic growth in this period? Figure 10 plots the annual number of acts passed between 1700 and 1850 against the trend growth rate of industrial production from Crafts and Harley (1992). We compare the number of acts with the growth rate because many authorized new property rights or infrastructure, and thus resembled an investment.

The trend growth rate of industrial production ranges between 0.5 and 1 percent between 1700 and 1770. It rises to between 1 and 2 percent between 1770 and 1800, around the same time that the number of acts begins to accelerate. The trend growth rate increases further to between 2 and 3 percent during the 1800s, 1810s, and 1820s, when the number of acts reaches its peak. Thereafter the two series diverge as the number of acts decline and the growth rate of industrial production remains high.

Based on this evidence there appears to be a correlation between the number of acts passed and faster economic growth. It is beyond the scope of this essay to identify whether legislation drove growth or vice versa. One possibility is that the growth in personal, statutory authority, and enclosure acts contributed to economic activity by reducing transaction costs in land markets and increased public goods. Another possibility is that growth raised the demand for new property rights and public goods, and hence caused the growth in legislation. We think that both
directions of causation operated from the eighteenth century onwards. During the seventeenth century, however, it appears that economic growth did not result in more personal and statutory authority acts. One reason is that instability in the political system made it difficult to pass legislation, even though there was likely to be a demand for infrastructure and changes in property rights.

5. Conclusions

Scholars have long been interested in the relationship between laws and British economic development during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. We confirm the results of previous scholars who show that the number of acts grew after 1690, and especially after 1750. We also show that much of the growth was due to legislation of a personal or local nature.

Our paper pushes the analysis further by focusing on three categories of legislation: personal, statutory authority, and enclosure acts. We show that estate acts were the most common type of personal act, and that they often allowed landowners to sell or lease property. These acts were necessary because some properties fell under the system of strict settlement, which meant that the owner agreed to become a life-tenant with limited ability to sell or sign long-term leases. The goal of strict settlements was to keep land within the family line, but it was costly because it introduced constraints on the use of property. Estate acts relaxed these constraints by allowing families to amend or dissolve certain provisions of their settlement. They increased rapidly in the 1690s and early 1700s, and led to a large increase in property sales and leases.

Statutory authority acts affected a broad range of infrastructure and public services. Many dealt with transport infrastructure, like roads, rivers, bridges, canals, ports, and railways, while others dealt with buildings, like churches, courthouses, workhouses, and prisons. In terms of
public services, statutory authority acts affected poor relief, policing, sanitation, and the recovery of small debts. Our analysis shows that over half of all statutory authority acts authorized the provision of new infrastructure or public services. We also estimate that the number of acts authorizing new infrastructure or public services grew rapidly after 1750.

Like estate acts, statutory authority acts involved the creation of a new set of rights. Specifically, they gave an organization the authority to charge user-fees, levy taxes, issue debt, issue shares, and purchase land. These rights were not always new, but they were certainly rare before the eighteenth century. We argue that the change in rights associated with statutory authority acts played a crucial role in the expansion of infrastructure and public services during the eighteenth century.

Enclosure acts changed property rights over agricultural land by eliminating open or common rights and creating private property rights. Their three main functions were to enclose, divide, and allot land. Enclosing and allotting were similar because they eliminated open fields and created a plot of land under the exclusive control of an individual. Dividing also led to individual holdings by eliminated the common pasture. Enclosure acts are another example of legislation that altered property rights. In this case, land use was affected, rather than the ability to sell or lease.

The evidence here points to a new interpretation of the role of government in the Industrial Revolution. The British government, an in particular Parliament, was not idle in the eighteenth century, as the laissez faire view would suggest. At the same time, Parliament was not directing economic activity or levying substantial taxes to pay for public goods. Instead, Parliament provided a forum in which changed property rights could be negotiated. It also provided
regulations that allowed individuals and organizations to provide infrastructure and public services.
References


### Table 1: The Distribution of Acts across Subject Categories, 1600-1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Acts</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>5064</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Authority</td>
<td>4929</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enclosure</td>
<td>3687</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7032</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: see text.

### Table 2: Subcategories for Personal Acts, 1600-1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Number of Acts</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>3275</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalization</td>
<td>1078</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: see text.

### Table 3: Subcategories for Estate Acts, 1600-1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Number of Acts</th>
<th>Percentage of all Estate Acts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vest</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settle</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharge</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: see text.
Table 4: Subcategories for Statutory Authority Acts, 1600-1815

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Number of Acts</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>2692</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canals</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridges</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Relief</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts of Small Request</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Administration</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: see text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Percentage of Acts that authorized what?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Canal</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair road</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widen road</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make road</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn or Alter road</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridge</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or repair bridge</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>River Navigation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make river navigable</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ports</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or repair harbor</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or repair Pier</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or repair Docks</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanse, water, light, or pave streets</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street watch</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove nuisances and annoyances</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply fresh water</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move or construct marketplace</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land Drainage</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draining land</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embanking land</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor Relief</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Workhouse</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Relief of Poor</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>County Justice and Administration</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or Repair Gaol or Debtors Prison</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or Repair Shire Hall or Court House</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Church</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or repair church</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build or repair churchyard or burial ground</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any of the Above</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Courts of Small Request</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy and Speedy Recovery of Small Debts</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Subcategories</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 20% random sample of all Statutory Authority Acts
Figure 1: Total Number of Acts of Parliament, 1500 and 1900

Sources: see text.
Figure 2: Subject Categories of Legislation: 1601-1815

[The image shows a graph with the x-axis representing five-year intervals from 1601 to 1815, and the y-axis showing the number of acts passed. The graph is divided into categories: Personal, Statutory Authorities, Enclosure, and all other.]

sources: see text.
Figure 3: Estimated Number of Acts that Authorized Property Sales

sources: 10% random sample of estate acts.
Figure 4: Estimated Number of Acts Authorizing Leases

sources: 10% random sample of estate acts.
Figure 5: Estimated number of Acts that authorized new infrastructure or public services, 1600-1815

Sources: 20% random sample of statutory authority acts
Figure 6: Estimated Number of Acts that authorized transport infrastructure versus acts that authorized other types of new infrastructure and public services.

Sources: 20% random sample of statutory authority acts
Figure 7: Estimated Number of Acts that Enclosed, Divided, or Allotted Land, 1725-1815

Sources: 10% random sample of enclosure acts
Figure 8: Acts of Parliament, 1603-1720

sources: see text.
Figure 9: Acts of Parliament and Royal Proclamations, 1603-1720

![Graph showing Acts plus Proclamations, 5 year moving average and without personal and stat authority, 5-year moving average.]

**Source:** see text.
Figure 10: Annual Number of Acts and the Trend Growth Rate of Industrial Production, 1700-1850

sources: see text.